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THE
RIG-VEDA and VEDIC RELIGION

WITH

READINGS FROM THE VEDAS

BY

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CHRISTIAN LITERATURE SOCIETY FOR INDIA
LONDON AND MADRAS
1913

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ERRATUM

On page 121, in the tenth line from the foot of the page, the reference should read : *Rig-veda* i. 162. 20, 21.

ABOUT two years ago the writer was asked to prepare for the Christian Literature Society for India a revised edition of the late Dr. Murdoch's *Account of the Vedas* and consented to do so. But he soon found that no revision of that book, useful as it had been, could be made that would adequately represent modern knowledge and modern methods of interpretation of the Vedas. Consequently the present volume, though containing all that was of permanent value in Dr. Murdoch's handbook, is a distinct and new treatment of the subject. But it makes no claim to be original. It is only a careful compilation of what is known of the life and religion and Hymns of Vedic times, and the bibliography and the footnotes will show to how many teachers the writer is, most gratefully, a debtor. He has ventured on independent statements only when reference is made to the influence of the Dravidian on the Aryan religion, or to the religious practices of Dravidians in South India at the present time—subjects on which he has had special opportunities of observation since 1892.

By the permission of Messrs. E. J. Lazarus & Co., Benares, the Readings from the Vedas are taken from the admirable series of translations of the Vedas prepared by the late R. T. H. Griffith and published by that firm.

A. C. CLAYTON.

NOTE ON THE SPELLING AND PRONUNCIATION OF SANSKRIT WORDS

As this book is written for the average student-reader rather than for the specialist, technicalities have, as far as possible, been avoided, but the transliteration of Sanskrit words will generally be found to agree with the scheme accepted by the Geneva Congress of Orientalists and the Royal Asiatic Society.

Some knowledge of the Sanskrit alphabet is needed to grasp the sounds of letters distinguished by diacritical marks such as ṇ, ṛ, ṭ, ś. But the distinction between long and short vowels is more easy to observe. All vowels are pronounced in Italian fashion rather than in English, i.e. like the vowels in 'do, re, mi, fa' of the musical scale. Long vowels have been given in the text with a long mark over them, e.g. Indrāṇī, Sūryā.

The short vowel *a* is never pronounced like the *a* in 'that'. It has always a sound corresponding to the *a* in 'era'. For instance, the first syllable in 'Varuṇa' is pronounced something like the first syllable in the word 'current'.

Many Sanskrit names, like Krishna, Rama, Sita and words like upanishad, rishi, veda, Rig-veda have become so well-known that usually it has not seemed needful to insert diacritical marks in them.

THE RIG-VEDA

AND

VEDIC RELIGION

I. THE ARYANS

IN the dawning time of history, somewhere in the lands beyond Afghanistan and north of Persia roamed bold tribes of fair-complexioned men and women with their horses and cattle. From stories that have come down to us about them, from words that they used which have still place in our speech, and from rites of worship still observed by many of their descendants to-day something can be known of their life and thoughts. They were a rough, brave, hardy, adventurous race, of honest and simple soul.

The early Aryans

Some of them gradually limited their wanderings to Irān, the land of Persia. There they settled and there they stayed, becoming the ancestors of the Parsis now in India; and their speech became the old Zend language and their religion, with its sacred literature, the *Avesta* of Zoroaster, developed into Zoroastrianism.

Others of these tribes, more daring, by long marches, and through many generations approached and entered India from the north-west. These were the men who called themselves 'Áryas', Aryans, a word meaning 'kinsmen' as distinct from the aboriginal tribes already dwelling in the land.[1] And though much concerning them is obscure, not a little is evident, and to-day it is

[1] MACDONNELL, *Sanskrit Literature*, p. 152.

possible to look back across the many centuries that separate us from those nomads and learn what manner of men they were. Having some conception of the men themselves, remembering that they were once alive, and vastly concerned with matters that fill men's lives, even to-day, it will be possible to go on to some survey of their hymns and their beliefs, their hopes and their fears, their gods and their demons, not as to a dry study of abstractions but in hope of finding the vital beginnings of faiths that still sway the hearts of millions in India.

The home of the Aryans

From the names of the rivers mentioned in their hymns it is clear that about the time that they were composed, the chief settlements of the Aryans in India were in the neighbourhood of the Sindhu, the modern Indus, a river which after receiving the waters of its tributaries is so wide that people on one bank cannot see the opposite bank. The Himalayas would prevent them from turning towards the north, and it is thus clear that before they crossed the Yamuna, the modern Jumna, and made their way to the Ganges, the Aryans dwelt mainly in East Kabulistan and the Panjab. The Saraswati was their southern boundary during that period.

As to other races that were in the land there is little information in the hymns of the Aryans and the science of ethnology has to help us. From it we learn that before the Aryans came India was sparsely peopled by some of the races that are now often called 'jungle tribes'. Among them the majority would be Dravidians. The Gonds, Bhīls and Santāls are modern



survivors of those races. Some were very humble in the scale of humanity burying their dead in the cells made of stone-slabs, called *Kistvaens* by scientists and 'Pāṇḍava vīdu'—the houses of the Pāṇḍava brothers when in exile—by the Tamil people of the south to this day. Those in the south were never so subject to the Aryans as the tribes of the north and grew into the

powerful and civilized Tamil and Telugu nations, but there is no hint of this in the Rig-veda. There these aborigines are named 'Dasyu' 'destroyers' or 'Dāsa', or 'injurious'. Their skins were much darker than those of the Aryans and so they were stigmatized as 'black' or 'black-skins'. From the shape of their broad noses they were called 'goat-nosed'. They possessed herds, they had strongholds called 'pur'. Those who were captured were made slaves, and the very word '*dāsa*' came to mean 'slave' in later Sanskrit and cognate languages. The references to their religion describe them as offering no sacrifices, being unbelievers in the gods of the Aryans, and thus grievously impious. There are two passages in which they are called *śiśna-devah*, 'whose god is the phallus' (*Rig-veda* vii. 21. 5; x. 99. 3), and it will be remembered that the phallus, as the linga, came to be the chief symbol of the god Siva in later Hinduism.[1]

The Dasyus

From the first these Dasyus were the enemies of the Aryans, but their demon worship greatly affected the Aryans, especially in the simpler domestic religion that has always been that of the ordinary folk.

Probably the conditions of climate and soil were then much as they are now and the Aryans who had lived in tents while they were nomads became dwellers in houses. The roofs of these houses were of long bamboos laid on rafters supported by pillars or corner posts. The spaces between the pillars were filled in with straw or reeds, tied in bundles. In places where stone was

[1] MACDONNELL, *Sanskrit Literature*, p. 153; *Vedic Index* ii. 382. Dr. Muir does not agree in this interpretation. *Sanskrit Texts* iv. 411.

readily obtainable it was sometimes used, and Indra is said to have destroyed a hundred cities of stone. The roof would be of thatch, and the various timbers were fastened together with bars, pegs, ropes and thongs. The house had a door fastened by a strap. A number of these houses made a village. Such villages were near to streams or rivers for the sake of crops and cattle. There were ramparts and ditches to protect the village from enemies or from flood. But there were no cities, if by city is meant a collection of houses near to each other surrounded by a wall.

Aryan houses

Bread, milk and products from milk, such as butter, cakes of flour and butter, vegetables and fruits were the usual articles of food. But meat, roasted or boiled, was eaten, though probably only at great feasts and family gatherings. The late Dr. Rajendralala Mitra occupied the highest rank among Indian scholars, and in his *Indo-Aryans*, he has a chapter headed, 'Beef in Ancient India.' It begins as follows:

Food

> The title of this paper will, doubtless, prove highly offensive to most of my countrymen; but the interest attached to the inquiry in connexion with the early social history of the Aryan race on this side of the Himalaya, will, I trust, plead my excuse. The idea of beef—the flesh of the earthly representative of the divine Bhagavati—as an article of food is so shocking to the Hindus, that thousands over thousands of the more orthodox among them never repeat the counterpart of the word in their vernaculars, and many and dire have been the sanguinary conflicts which the shedding of the blood of cows has caused in this country. And yet it would seem that there was a time when

not only no compunctions, visitings of conscience, had a place in the mind of the people in slaughtering cattle—when not only the meat of that animal was actually esteemed a valuable aliment—when not only was it a mark of generous hospitality, as among the ancient Jews, to slaughter the 'fatted calf' in honour of respected guests—but when a supply of beef was deemed an absolute necessity by pious Hindus in their journey from this to another world, and a cow was invariably killed to be burnt with the dead.

Dr. Rajendralala Mitra quotes Colebrooke's opinion as follows:

> It seems to have been anciently the custom to slay a cow on that occasion (the reception of a guest) and a guest was therefore called a *goghna*, or 'cow killer'. In the *Uttara Rāma Charitra* the venerable old poet and hermit Valmiki, when preparing to receive his brother sage Vasiṣṭa, the author of one of the original law books (*Smṛitis*) which regulates the religious life of the people, and a prominent character even in the Vedas, slaughtered a lot of calves expressly for the entertainment of his guests. Vasiṣṭa, in his turn, likewise slaughtered the 'fatted calf' when entertaining Viśvamitra, Janaka, Satānanda, Jamadagnya, and other sages and friends.[1]

Cows and oxen were sacrificed on certain occasions even in later Vedic times and on such occasions priest and sacrificer would eat part of the flesh of the victim.[2]

Salt is not mentioned in the hymns, though it abounds in the Northern Panjab.

For drink the Aryans used *surā*, a brandy made from corn or barley, and *soma*, the sap of a herb of the

[1] *Indo-Aryans*, vol. i, pp. 356–8.

[2] See Section v. *The Sacrifices of the Aryans*, also MACDONNELL, *Vedic Index* ii. 145.

Sarcostemma species, which on account of its stimulating and exciting character was deified.

The Aryans kept herds of cattle and horses. Goats, buffaloes and camels are mentioned. There are many prayers for these in the hymns, especially for cows that yield the white milk from which mead and butter, 'the favourite food of gods and men', were prepared. An Aryan called his daughter *duhitṛi* or milkmaid, and the word *gopa*, cowkeeper, came to mean any protector.

Agriculture

Agriculture was the principal industry. Plough and harrow, mattock and hoe were used, and sometimes water was conducted in irrigation channels. There were two harvests in the year, especially for barley. The grain was threshed; the chaff was winnowed away; the corn was ground in a mill; and bread was made from the flour. Agriculture was more important than hunting with the bow, or capturing game with snares, or than fishing.

Artisans

Wood-workers, who had tools such as hatchets and planes, built wagons and war-chariots, or carved wooden cups. There were tanners who made leather from the hide of slaughtered cattle, and manufactured it into waterbottles, bow-strings, slings and the like. There were workers in metal, smiths who made weapons and rims for the wheels of carts, and potters. Women spun and wove wool and made garments. There were even barbers.

Trade existed as barter, and the value of goods was calculated at so many cows. Golden ornaments were beginning to be used. Goldsmiths are spoken of and usurers are mentioned. The Babylonian *minā* of gold seems to have been called *manā* in Sanskrit which may

be an indication of very early intercourse between India and the western Semitic races. Ships are mentioned.

The family was the unit and the father of the family was its high-priest and head, and controlled the worship of the ancestors of the family in all details. He knew the peculiar ritual which was traditional in his family, and which had to be maintained unchanged, if the favour of the dead was to be retained. He alone had the power to pass on the rites to his son. The reverence and the power which his priestly position brought him made him supreme in the household. He had full power over his wife and his young children, and his grown-up sons were under his authority. The property of the family was altogether in his hands. This was the source of the paternal authority (*patria potestas*) of the Roman father, and of the prominent place held by the father in Greece, Persia, India, and among Teutonic and Slavonic peoples as well. This type of family, which is known as the patriarchal, succeeded an earlier and less developed type.[1]

The father

Youths and maidens saw each other at festivals. Should the youth be attracted he generally but not always asked for the maiden in marriage from her father through a friend. It was considered improper for the marriages of younger sons or daughters to be arranged before those of their elder brothers and sisters. If the suitor was approved he occasionally had to purchase his bride by giving gifts to her father. A dowry was sometimes given with the bride. The marriage was performed in the presence of

Marriage

[1] FARQUHAR, *Primer of Hinduism*, pp. 5–6.

both families and their friends in the house of the bride's parents. The fire was kindled on the domestic altar and the bride was handed by her father to her husband. The bridegroom took hold of the right-hand of the bride with his right-hand repeating the formula:

> By thy right-hand for happiness I take thee,
> That thou may'st reach old age with me, thy husband.
> Aryaman, Bhaga, Savitar, Puramdhi,
> Gave thee to me to rule our home together.
>
> *Rig-veda* x. 85. 36.

After repeating other verses he led his bride round the altar, from left to right (*pradakshina*), and she was then his wife, and he her husband. Then followed a feast and the wife was taken to her husband's house on a wagon decked with flowers and drawn by white cattle. Here hymns or parts of hymns were chanted, full of goodwill to the wife, and her authority was solemnly declared.

> Here now remain, nor ever part;
> Enjoy the whole expanse of life,
> With son and grandson joyous sport
> Be glad in heart within your house.
>
> So rule and govern in thy home
> Over thy husband's parents both;
> His brother and his sister, too,
> Are subject likewise there to thee.
>
> *Rig-veda* x. 85. 42, 46.

Clearly the Aryan bride was of an age fitting her to be wife and mother and mistress of a home when she was married. In the home the wife took part with her husband in the daily sacrifice.

Some kings and nobles might have more than one wife. The two Aśvins had together one wife, Sūryā,

the daughter of the sun-god. But the ordinary condition was 'a united pair, with one heart and one mind, free from discord'. The marriage of blood relations was thought wrong. The birth of a daughter is nowhere sought, but sons are earnestly desired.

Widows

There is no evidence in the Rig-veda that when her husband died the Aryan widow had to burn herself on his funeral pyre. The eighteenth hymn of the tenth Book of Rig-veda refers to the death of a husband, to the vicissitude of life and to the funeral ceremonies. The seventh verse runs as follows in Kaegi's translation.[1]

> The women here, still happy wives, not widowed, shall come and bring rich oil and precious ointment; and tearless, blooming, rich adorned, may they first approach the resting-place of the departed.
>
> *Rig-veda* x. 18. 7.

The words 'may they *first* approach the place' are a translation of the Sanskrit words

ā rohantu yonim agre.

By the most awful crime in the history of literature this phrase was altered in later times. It then read

ā rohantu yonim agneh

meaning 'let them enter the place of fire', and by this terrible falsification the verse was made to justify the burning of widows.

The exact opposite was the fact. Among the early Aryans the widow might marry again. The very next verse of the same hymn calls on the widow to rise from beside the bier or pyre and take the hand of her new

[1] KAEGI, *Rig-veda*, p. 77.

husband, 'doubtless', says Prof. Macdonnell (*Sanskrit Literature*, p. 126) 'a brother of the deceased, in accordance with an ancient marriage custom' of which a trace remained among the Hebrews. I quote his translation.

> Rise up; come to the world of life, O woman;
> Thou liest here by one whose soul has left him.
> Come: thou hast now entered upon the wifehood
> Of this thy lord who takes thy hand and woos thee.
>
> *Rig-veda* x. 18. 8.

There may have been instances of widow burning in early Aryan times but it was during a much later period (A.D. 650–1200) that the custom of burning a widow with her husband's body came gradually into force. Such a widow is highly praised in the *Garuḍa Purāṇa*; she was called a *satī* (pronounced *suttee*) emphatically a 'good' woman. Hence the modern name of the custom. At the same time it became customary for a widow who did not ascend her husband's pyre to live a life of asceticism and privation, and precepts sanctioning the practice were inserted in the later sacred books. Farquhar quotes one:

> If a woman's husband dies, let her lead a life of chastity, or else mount his pyre.
>
> *Vishnusmṛiti* xxv. 14.

Since the head of the family was a man and every clan and family wanted men to protect it from its enemies, there was a tendency to set less value on women. The general opinion of the female sex seems to have been that put into the mouth of Indra: 'Indra himself hath said, The mind of woman brooks not discipline. Her intellect hath little weight' (*Rig-veda* viii. 33. 17), and 'the hearts of women

Position of women

are those of hyenas' (x. 95. 15). From a very early date prostitution was an institution.

That women were not debarred from hearing the Vedas is clear, for the authors of some of the hymns of the Aryan tribes were women. Apālā composed a hymn that is now the eightieth in the eighth book of the Rig-veda, and Ghoshā, a leper maiden, was author of two, the thirty-ninth and the fortieth in the tenth book.

Beyond saying that the king, *rāja*, was a ruler it is not possible to define his exact rank and authority.

The king

Probably it entirely depended on the individual. He was the chief of a group of families. Sometimes he was chosen. Sometimes his rank was hereditary. In time of peace he was 'judge and protector' of his people, who brought to him voluntary gifts. In time of war he was the leader of the warriors, and before a battle he would offer sacrifice for his tribe, or cause a priestly singer to offer it. This was the beginning of that difference of office which lay at the root of the later distinction of the warrior and priest castes among the Aryans.

Morality was a family and tribal matter. Truth, right-conduct, kindliness, loyalty to one's neighbour and comrade, bravery, and—later—careful observance of religious rites and liberality to priests were counted high virtues. Fraud, malignant speech, lying and treachery were roundly condemned. Violence to defenceless maidens and the adultery of a wife were regarded as grave crimes.

Morality and crime

Such crimes as one would expect to find among tribal peoples entering on a new civilization are mentioned in the hymns. Raiders carry off cattle. Robbers are found

on highways. A thief steals an honest man's clothes. There are sorcerers who utter harmful spells, and seducers of women.

For protection from his enemies the Aryan trusted the gods and his own right arm. For crimes in the community there were judgements, ordeals and punishments, and the vengeance of the gods.

Gambling was a terrible curse to the Aryan. The hymns say that the father's punishment of the dissolute son is of no effect; the player is unmoved by the destruction of his home; he remains indifferent though his wife becomes the property of others; he rises early and indulges in the passion of play till evening; defeat in play is equivalent to starvation and thirst.

Gambling

In one of the hymns[1] a gambler vividly describes his own experience:

1. The tumbling, air-born (products) of the great Vibhidaka tree (i. e. the dice) delight me as they continue to roll on the dice board. The exciting dice seem to me like a draught of the soma-plant growing on mount Pujavat.

7. Hooking, piercing, deceitful, vexatious, delighting to torment, the dice dispense transient gifts, and again ruin the winner; they appear to the gambler covered with honey.

13. Never play with dice; practice husbandry; rejoice in thy property, esteeming it sufficient.

At a sacrifice, the Kshatriya in particular used to play at dice with his wife, or wives, and sons.

[1] Rig-veda x. 34, quoted in the section *Readings from the Vedas*.

Dancers or actors afforded entertainment to the Aryans. Ushas is said to display herself like a dancer who decks herself with ornaments. Allusion is made to the living going forth to dance and laugh after a funeral. Drums are mentioned, and a hymn in the Atharva-veda is addressed to that musical instrument.

Dancing

The Aryans delighted in chariot races. The sixty-ninth hymn in the eighth book of the Rig-veda is a prayer to Indra, called Śatakratu the god of a hundred rites, for success in a coming chariot race. It reads as follows in Griffith's translation:—

Chariot races

1. O Śatakratu, truly I have made none else my comforter.
 Indra, be gracious unto us.
2. Though who hast ever aided us kindly of old to win the spoil,
 As such, O Indra, favour us.
3. What now! As prompter of the poor thou helpest him who sheds the juice.
 Wilt thou not, Indra, strengthen us?
4. O Indra, help our chariot on, yea, thunderer, though it lag behind:
 Give this my car the foremost place.
5. Ho there! why sittest thou at ease? Make thou my chariot to be first:
 And bring the fame of victory near.
6. Assist our car that seeks the prize. What can be easier for thee?
 So make thou us victorious.

These chariot races were a training for war. And the tribes of the Aryans were constantly at war, sometimes among themselves and sometimes with the Dasyus, the races in India before the Aryans entered it. These Aryan expeditions were often raids for cattle or reprisals on tribes that had attacked the Aryan villages. Indeed the term *gosuyudh* 'fighting among or for cows' is used in the Veda as a name for a warrior in general (i. 112, 122) and a common word for battle is *gaviṣṭi*, literally 'striving for cows'.

War

The bands of the Aryans marched under their leaders, who had banners. They would sing or shout the prowess of their ancestors, and boast of the aid which Indra or Bṛihaspati granted them. Conches were blown as horns. Sometimes the leader drove in a war-chariot covered with cowhides; some warriors used bows and arrows; others had darts. The bands often slew all in the villages they conquered. Sometimes they were content to carry off the plunder. When an invader attacked an Aryan settlement, ramparts were thrown up, trees were made into barricades, and the gods were called to aid. The 'Weapon-song' is a hymn that echoes with the clamour of the strife.[1]

From the Vedas it is clear that like their civilization, the science of the Aryans was of a rude and elementary character. The earliest Aryans only knew a few stars or constellations, and there is no certain evidence that the planets were known to the singers of the Rig-vedic age. Aryan ideas of the origin of the universe are utterly

The childhood of the Aryan race

[1] *Rig-veda* 6. 75, quoted below in the *Readings*.

inadequate and primitive; and though Aryan medical science distinguished several diseases, its remedies were charms and amulets and herbs used in conjunction with incantations. The world was very wonderful to the Aryans as they lived and fought in the Land of the Five Rivers. But theirs was a very limited life, unsophisticated in its aims, direct and frank in its activities, lived in the open air, full of health from sun and wind and rains. As Max Müller says:

> In the hymns of the Veda we see man left to himself to solve the riddle of this world. We see him crawling on like a creature of the earth with all the desires and weakness of his animal nature. Food, wealth and power, a large family and a long life, are the theme of his daily prayers. But he begins to lift up his eyes. He stares at the tent of heaven, and asks who supports it? He opens his eyes to the winds, and asks them whence and whither? He is awakened from darkness and slumber by the light of the sun, and him whom his eyes cannot behold, and who seems to grant him the daily pittance of his existence, he calls 'his life, his breath, his brilliant Lord and Protector'.[1]

And it is only as this is remembered that it is possible to appreciate the hopes and fears, the prayers and aspirations, the courage and the patience of the bards who sang, in those far away centuries, the very heart's thoughts of the men whose pilgrimage into India was to have such a mighty effect on the history and the thought of the world.

Their hymns

They were the direct ancestors of many of the tribes comprised in the great Brahman caste of modern India. Their speech was the

[1] MAX MULLER, *Chips*, vol. i, 2nd ed., p. 69.

mother language of many of the languages spoken in India to-day, and from it all have borrowed the terms of philosophy, worship and faith. Their religion was the beginning of religions that have stirred the hearts of millions. To know how they prayed and built their earliest altar-fires and offered sacrifice with song is to know how the forefathers of Hindu and Greek and Briton sought divine grace and divine protection. One of the most precious heir-looms of the ages for all thinking men are the hymns which were first sung by the poets among those primitive warriors and herdsmen. For those hymns have come down to us, and however much they may have been changed between the moment that the inspired bard chanted them to his tribesmen and the time when they were written down to abide for ever, they bring those far away days back to us. Through them the hopes and fears of the singer and his hearers ring in our ears. In them we come face to face with the joys and sorrows, the war and peace, the funerals and festivals of forty centuries ago.

II. THE VEDAS OF THE ARYANS

PRECISELY how and when the hymns of the Aryans were first composed we shall never know. Much in them is and always will be obscure. What scrupulous scribe first toilsomely wrote them out is not recorded. But thereafter, though the language of those hymns became less and less familiar the psalm-books into which they were gathered were practically never altered and the student to-day has little doubt that the text before him is almost syllable for syllable, as it was three thousand years ago; often as it was when it was composed and sung at some sacrifice in the years before the Aryans had done more than make raids into the land of the Five Rivers.

How the West learned of the hymns

The existence of a sacred literature in Sanskrit was known to some of the first Roman Catholic missionaries in India, and men like Robert de Nobili who arrived in Madura in 1606 and Constantine Beschi a century later acquired sufficient knowledge of it to compose and argue in it.

But the translation of the *Bhagavad Gītā*, by Charles Wilkins, published in 1785, and of *Śakuntala*, by Sir Williams Jones, published in 1789, were the real commencement of the scientific study of the Sanskrit language, and the publication and translation of the most important works in that language. Yet for a long time it was

difficult to obtain accurate knowledge of the Vedas. Very few manuscript copies were in existence, and while the pandits were willing to communicate the manuscripts of the later and less sacred Sanskrit works of law, philosophy and drama to Englishmen resident in India, they were not willing to show them the manuscripts of the more ancient and infinitely more holy Vedas. In some cases where the manuscripts of the Vedas had come into western hands, the pandits would not translate them. Colebrooke (1765—1837) alone seemed able to overcome these prejudices and his essays *On the Vedas, or the Sacred Writings of the Hindus* though published in 1805 are of permanent value.

The publication of the Vedas

Nearly a quarter of a century later a young German scholar named Friedrich Rosen began to work at an edition of the Sanskrit text of the Rig-veda for publication. Max Müller relates an incident which shows the opinion of the intrinsic value of the hymns of the Vedas held by a highly-educated Hindu thinker, and probably by not a few others, at that time. The Raja Rammohun Roy was in London and saw Friedrich Rosen at the British Museum busily engaged in copying manuscripts of the Rig-veda. The Raja was surprised, and told Rosen that he ought not to waste his time on the hymns, but that he should study the Upanishads.[1] Rosen published a specimen of the hymns of the Rig-veda in 1830, but he died before he had nearly completed his task. Only the first book of the Rig-veda, with a Latin

[1] MAX MULLER, *Biographical Essays*, p. 39.

translation, was finished by him and published after his death in 1838.

In 1845 Max Müller was at work in Paris, copying from manuscripts the text of the Rig-veda together with the commentary of Sāyaṇa Áchārya. Sāyaṇa died in 1387 at Vijayanagara, the capital of the famous Hindu kingdom founded about 1340 which is now a long stretch of ruins known as Hampi in the Bellary district of the Madras Presidency. He was teacher and minister of one of the kings of that dynasty, and was younger brother of Mādhava Áchārya, the author of the compendium of philosophical systems called the *Sarva-darsana-samgraha*.[1] Sāyaṇa's commentary no doubt embodied the opinion of the most learned pandits of the time, and though composed perhaps almost three thousand years later than the hymns contains exceedingly valuable traditional interpretations. The East India Company authorized Max Müller to bring out an edition of the hymns with this commentary at its expense. The first volume appeared in 1849. The publication of the edition was completed within about twenty years. The price of the six volumes was £15. The second edition, in four volumes, was brought out at the expense of the then Maharajah of Vizianagaram, and sold at £8. This is regarded as the standard edition both of the text of the Rig-veda and of Sāyaṇa's commentary.

The text of the Rig-veda was published in roman letters at Berlin in 1861.

The text of the Sāma-veda, with a German translation, was published by Benfey in 1848.

[1] MACDONELL, *Sanskrit Literature*, pp. 59, 275, 406.

Various texts of the different recensions of the Yajur-veda have been edited by A. Weber, and L. von Schroeder.

The text of the Atharva-veda was published by Roth and Whitney in 1856; and another recension from a single ancient birch-bark manuscript discovered by Professor Bühler in Kashmir is being prepared by Dr. Maurice Bloomfield.

Translations into English

An English translation of the Rig-veda, based on the interpretations contained in the commentary of Sāyaṇa was commenced in 1850 by Professor H. H. Wilson, the first professor of Sanskrit at Oxford. Part of it was published after his death. Professor E. B. Cowell in his preface to the fifth volume says that 'this work does not pretend to give a complete translation of the Rig-veda, but only a faithful image of that particular phase of its interpretation which the mediaeval Hindus, as represented by Sāyaṇa have preserved'.

A translation of many of the hymns of the Rig-veda entitled *The Sacred Hymns of the Brahmans* was prepared by Max Müller, and published in Trübner's Oriental Series, in two volumes.

A translation of many of the hymns entitled *Vedic Hymns*, by Max Müller and Oldenberg appears in the series of translations known as *The Sacred Books of the East*, published by the University of Oxford.

Perhaps the most helpful of all manuals of Vedic teaching are the five volumes of *Original Sanskrit Texts*, by Dr. John Muir (Trübner & Co.). They contain classified collections of Vedic and later texts with accurate translations and a vast collection of notes and

comments. Dr. Muir's method enables the student to see for himself the evolution Sanskrit teaching from the earlier ideas, the origin of myths, the development of customs, and the influence of later environment. It is a notable treasure-house of exact scholarship.

Mr. R. T. H. Griffith, formerly Principal of the Sanskrit College, Benares, made complete translations of all four Vedas, Mr. Griffith had the great advantage of long residence in Benares, and some of the most learned pandits in India were his fellow-workers. The notes that accompany his translations are of high value. For the English student this is the most useful rendering, and its completeness makes it more serviceable than any other.[1]

By reprints of the Sanskrit text, by accurate translations, and by many comments and discussions among scholars in Europe and America and India during the last sixty or seventy years it has rapidly become possible to appreciate the precise value and significance of these ancient hymns, to understand the general circumstances in which they were composed, and the motives that inspired their authors; and thus to become acquainted with Aryan singers and priests at the beginning of Indian civilization.

[1] The following are the editions of Mr. Griffith's translations:—

The Hymns of the Rig-veda. Second edition. Two volumes. Price fourteen rupees.

The Hymns of the Sama-veda. One volume. Price four rupees.

The Hymns of the White Yajur-veda. One volume. Price three rupees twelve annas.

The Hymns of the Atharva-veda. Two volumes. Price twelve rupees. All these translations are published by Messrs. E. I. Lazarus & Co., Benares.

The sacred books of the Hindus include a wide range of religious literature composed in the Sanskrit language. They are divided into two classes, called *Śruti* and *Smṛiti*. The term *Smṛiti* means 'memory', 'recollection', 'tradition', and the books denoted by *Smṛiti* are the accounts of the gods and goddesses composed in comparatively modern times, known as the eighteen *Purāṇas* and the *Upa-purāṇas*; the collections of aphorisms dealing with household matters and social and legal usage, such as the *Smarta* or *Gṛihya Sūtras*; the *Dharma Sūtras*, and the Law Book of Manu; the six *Vedāngas*, dealing with phonetics, grammar, etymology, religious practice and astrology; and the great epic poems, the *Rāmāyana* and the *Mahābhārata*. The term *Śruti* or 'hearing' is that used to indicate what was directly heard by or was revealed to the holy sages of old.[1] *Śruti* is thought of as existing from eternity, made known to the sages in time, and transmitted by them to their disciples, but not composed or arranged by them.

Sruti and Smriti

The works indicated by the term *Śruti* are the four Vedas, or *Samhitās* or collections of hymns or *mantras*; and the Brāhmaṇas of the Vedas, with their Araṇyakas for hermits and their Upanishads.[2]

The term *Veda* is from the Sanskrit root *vid*, 'to know', a root which also appears in the Latin *videre*, 'to see', and the English 'wit'. *Veda* primarily signifies 'knowledge'; it

The Veda

[1] MACDONELL, *Sanskrit Literature*, p. 34.
[2] Ibid., p. 205.

designates 'sacred lore' as a branch of literature; and is also applied to the book containing the sacred lore.[1] It is thus used in a general sense to denote the whole body of the most ancient Sanskrit literature, but it particularly refers to the four great collections of hymns that contain the divine wisdom named the Rig-veda, the Yajur-veda, the Sama-veda and the Atharva-veda.

These names of the four Vedas are derived from terms which refer to the different styles of composition found in them. These four names, according to Dr. Maurice Bloomfield, belong to a somewhat later Vedic time; they do not coincide exactly with the earlier names, nor do they fully correspond to the contents of the collections themselves as they now stand. The earlier terms referred to the different styles of composition, They were:

Names of the Vedas

ṛicaḥ, stanzas of praise;
yajūnshi, liturgical stanzas and formulas;
sāmāni, melodies;
and *atharvāngirasaḥ*, blessings and curses. But the collection which now goes by the name of Rig-veda contains—in its later parts—'blessings and curses', as well as 'stanzas of praise', together with most of the stanzas which form the text to the *sāman*-melodies of the Sāma-veda. Similarly the Atharva-veda contains *ṛicaḥ*, 'stanzas of praise', and *yajūnshi*, 'liturgical stanzas' mostly worked over for its own purposes, as well as its characteristic 'blessings and curses'. The Yajur-veda also contains matter of the other Vedic types in addition to liturgical formulae.

[1] MACDONELL, *Sanskrit Literature*, p. 29.

The Sāma-veda is merely a collection of certain *ṛicaḥ*, or 'stanzas of praise', taken with variations and additions from the Rig-veda, and set to tunes indicated by musical notations.[1]

Careful examination shows that these four collections of hymns fall into two groups. In the former are the Rig-veda, the Sāma-veda and the Yajur-veda. In the other the Atharva-veda stands alone. This distinction is based on differences in contents, character and date.

The relation of the four Vedas

The relation of the Rig, Sama and Yajur-vedas is not very complex. The Sama and Yajur-vedas were not independent of the Rig-veda, and both were of later date. The origin of the three may be outlined somewhat as follows: In the earliest times any one might perform sacrifice. Then a priestly class arose distinct from the ordinary people, and it may be supposed that it was during this period that the hymns of the Rig-veda were collected. Speedily, however, as sacrifice and ceremonial was elaborated different orders came into existence among the priests. The highest order was that of the Hotṛis who recited hymns in praise of the god to whom the sacrifice was being offered while the ceremony was being performed. They recited hymns from the Rig-veda but no special collection of hymns, no samhitā, was ever made for them. For two other classes of priests such collections, or psalm books were made. It was the duty of the Udgātṛi priests to chant according to certain traditional rules during the sacrifice of Soma, and for this

[1] *Religion of the Veda*, p. 26.

purpose a number of hymns were collected from the Rig-veda, especially from the Eighth and Ninth Books. These hymns form the Sāma-veda, and of the 1549 verses in it only seventy-eight are not found in the Rig-veda.

Another collection of hymns was incorporated in a sacrificial service book along with a number of prose directions for performing the sacrifice. It was the manual of the Adhvaryus and contained the verses to be muttered by them and their assistants who prepared the space of ground and the altar, offered the sacrificial victims and poured out the libations. This was the Yajur-veda. Two distinct forms of this Veda have come down to us. In the oldest, the instructions about ritual are mingled with the original verses from the Rig-veda. The chief recension of this is that taught by a school of teachers called the Taittirīyans. At a later date other scholars called the Vājasaneyins separated the dogmatic or explanatory matter from the verses to be recited and the name of 'clear' or '*White*' (*Śukla*) *Yajur-veda*, was applied to their recension, the other being called the *Black* (*Kṛishṇa*) *Yajur-veda*.

The prose passages of the Yajur-veda are, of course, new matter. The verse portion is chiefly taken from the Rig-veda, but there are some new verses in cases where it was not possible to extract from the Rig-veda verses suitable to the complex ritual that had been elaborated by the later priesthood of the debased form of the Aryan faith current before the rise of the philosophic schools and Buddhism and Jainism.

It is difficult to ascertain clearly the date of the

Yajur-veda. It makes use of the Rig-veda, but the verses quoted are taken out of their connexion and adapted to different purposes. There are many new verses about the ritual of the sacrifices. Its characteristic element are the prose formulae, the *yajus*, which are in prose, and this is the oldest prose literature of the Indo-European peoples. These are sometimes brief prayers or sacrificial phrases and sometimes they are long sentences, full of repetitions, concerning the sacrificial victims or the ceremony. Dr. Bloomfield quotes one that is typical:

The Yajur-veda

> May life prosper through the sacrifice.
> May life's breath prosper through the sacrifice.
> May the eye prosper through the sacrifice.
> May the ear prosper through the sacrifice.
> May the back prosper through the sacrifice.
> May the sacrifice prosper through the sacrifice.

Many thousand formulae of this kind are collected in the great concordance of the Vedas prepared by Dr. Bloomfield. Apart from their lack of meaning, they show says he, 'a formalism and mental decay upon the very brink of dissolution'. And both it and the Brāhmaṇas belong to a period in the history of religion in India when ceremonial and sacrifice had almost destroyed the simpler religious ideas of the early Aryans.

The Sāma-veda is a problem to scholars for its origin and purpose are not clear. There are no connected hymns but verses, generally derived from the Rig-veda, meant to be chanted, and when accompanied by their music these were called *sāmāni*, melodies. The chanting of these verses was also interrupted by crying aloud formal exclamatory

The Sama-veda

syllables, such as *om*, *hai* at certain points or at the end of the stanzas, perhaps something like the shouts that accompany religious processions in India to-day. The Sāma-veda was not held in the same repute as the Rig-veda and Yajur-veda and the recitation of either of them had to cease when the shout of *sāmans* was heard. Except that it represents the use of chanting in later Aryan worship the Sāma-veda adds very little to the information that is to be obtained about the religious practices of the Aryans. And like the Yajur-veda it belongs to the time when priestly formalism dominated the worship of the Aryans.

The Atharva-veda

The last book, Book XX, of the Atharva-veda, is almost entirely made up of hymns taken bodily from the Rig-veda and of hymns compiled from verses of the Rig-veda. Evidently this section has been added to connect the Atharva-veda with the Rig-veda and so to give it more authority, for as a whole the Atharva-veda is plainly of quite a different origin to the rest of the Vedas. It is really a collection of spells, and it may represent the popular beliefs of the common people among the Aryans in some passages, especially as those beliefs were modified by the influence of the demon-worship of the aborigines whom the Aryans conquered. It also contains ideas about the gods belonging to a later period than that of the Rig-veda. While the Rig-veda is the psalm-book of the worship of the Bright Gods, the most salient teaching of the Atharva-veda is sorcery of various sorts. Some spells are benevolent, such as those for health and prosperity, for safety from demons, for establishing harmony in village and family life, and for the

reconciliation of enemies, but there is much that is born of fear and horror.

Madame Ragozin justly says:

> We have here, as though in opposition to the bright, cheerful pantheon of beneficent deities, so trustingly and gratefully addressed by the Rishis of the Rig, a weird repulsive world of darkly scowling demons, inspiring abject fear, such as never sprang from Aryan fancy. We find ourselves in the midst of a goblin-worship, the exact counterpart of that with which we became familiar in Turanian Chaldea. Every evil thing in nature, from a drought to a fever or bad qualities of the human heart, is personified and made the object of terror-stricken propitiation, or of attempts at circumvention through witchcraft, or the instrument of harm to others through the same compelling force. Here and there, worship takes the form of conjuring, not prayer; its ministers are sorcerers, not priest.[1]

The traditional Hindu view is that the Atharva-veda is inferior to the other Vedas and modern scholarship is convinced that it is not of the same antiquity as the Rig-veda.

Griffith, who has translated it, gives his own opinion and those of other eminent scholars on this point as follows:

> I have called the Atharva-veda a comparatively late addition to the three ancient Vedas, of which, it may be observed, one only, the Rig-veda, is original and historical, the other two being merely liturgical compilations. The Atharva is like the Rik, in the main historical and original, but its contents cannot, as a whole, lay claim to equal antiquity.

[1] *Vedic India*, p. 117.

He also quotes Professor Whitney, one of the most learned of Sanskrit scholars, who wrotes:

> The greater portion of the hymns are plainly shown, both by their language and internal character, to be of much later date than the general contents of the other historic Veda, and even than its tenth book with which they stand nearly connected in import and origin. . . . This, however, would not imply that the main body of the Atharva hymns were not already in existence when the compilation of the Rik took place. Their character would be ground enough for their rejection and exclusion from the canon until other hands were found to undertake their separate gathering into an independent collection.[1]

Professor Weber concludes that the origin of the Atharva Samhitā dates from the period when Brahmanism had become dominant. In it he finds the worshipper oppressed by anxious dread of the evil spirits of nature and of their magic powers, seeking refuge in ceremonialism. He suggests that, while the Rig-veda contains the songs of the higher Aryan families, the parts of the Atharva-veda that are peculiar to it may belong to the lower ranks, that is to the common people, most likely to be affected by the demon worship of the Dasyus.

The oldest name of the Atharva-veda is *atharvāṅgirasah*, a compound word made up of the names of two families of priests, the Atharvans and the Angirases.[2] The former name was thought to indicate 'holy charms', or 'blessings' and the latter 'witchcraft charms' or 'curses'. Thus it is the book of 'blessings and curses'. It is sometimes called the *Bhṛigvaṅgirasah*, a name in

[1] GRIFFITH, *Atharva-veda* Preface, iv.

[2] BLOOMFIELD, *Religion of the Veda*, p. 39.

which the word *Bhṛigus* takes the place of the term *Atharva* with the same meaning of 'blessings'.

It is also called the Brahma-veda, the Veda of the Brāhman, that is the Veda of the supervising priest who watched the performance of the Vedic (*Śrauta*) sacrifices. But this name may also be due to the fact that there are included in this Veda hymns which deal with 'Brahman', the monistic supreme principle of later Hindu thought.

The Three Vedas and the Atharva-veda

The *Taittirīya Samhitā* of the Black Yajur-veda mentions the Rig, Sāma and Yajur-vedas alone in several passages (e. g. ii. 4, 12, 7; vii. 3, 1, 4). The *Śatapatha-brāhmana* uses the term *trayi-vidyā* for the Rig, Sāma and Yajur-vedas. The *dharma* literature also agrees that the Atharvan, while useful and even indispensable under certain circumstances, is on the whole inferior in character and position.

Pre-eminence of the Rig-veda

There is, therefore, full justification for considering the Atharva-veda as distinct from the other three and recording a later phase of the Aryans' religion. It will thus lie outside the scope of this volume to deal with it. At the same time it may be noted that in a brief, rapid and general survey of Vedic teaching, such as this, there will be little need to give detailed attention to the Sāma and Yajur-vedas. It is the Rig-veda which gives the most valuable materials to the student of the Aryan religion. The Sāma-veda and the Yajur-veda both reflect the time when ceremonialism was corrupting earlier and simpler beliefs. Valuable as they and the Atharva-veda are for a history of the deterioration of the

primitive faith as it came in closer relation to the demon worship of the aboriginal peoples of India, they do not give much help to the understanding of the earlier religion. For that appeal must always be made to the Rig-veda, and consequently reference will here be made almost exclusively to the Rig-veda.

Each of the four Vedas is divided into two parts, the Mantras and the Brāhmaṇas.

The Mantras

Mantra means 'instrument of thought', speech, a sacred text or saying, a prayer or song of praise, a Vedic hymn in particular, or a sacrificial formula. In modern vernaculars the word is now used to denote a magic spell or incantation and, this meaning is derived from the older idea that the Vedic hymn sung or recited would secure the favour of the gods or avert ill-fortune from them or from human enemies.

The hymns are also called Sūktas: a term derived from *su-ukta* 'that which is well or properly recited.' This term is used of a Vedic hymn as a whole as distinguished from a *ṛich* or single verse.[1]

The Samhitas

Each entire collection of Mantras forms a Samhitā. The Samhitā, in the case of the Rig-veda, and of the Sāma and Yajur-vedas so far as they are borrowed from it, consist of the songs of the early Aryan sages as they have been handed down by tradition. In the Rig-veda they are nearest in form to the spontaneous utterances of the bards who first sung them. In the Sāma and the Yajur-vedas the poetry of the ancient psalmists is moulded by the usage of a later ritual, and does not vibrate with the ancient

[1] MONIER WILLIAMS *Sanskrit-English Lexicon*, 786, 1015, 1240.

fervour. The Mantras in the Samhitā of the Atharva-veda are of a different order. Incantations, spells, magical formulae form its Samhitā, and, as applied to its contents, the term *mantra* has precisely the meaning which it generally has when used in the South Indian vernaculars.

The Brahmanas

The second part of each Veda, the Brāhmaṇa, was drawn up for ceremonial instruction of the Brahmans. They are really directories for the priests who used the Vedas in worship. They contain regulations regarding the employment of the mantras, and the celebration of the various rites of sacrifice, and also include treatises called *Āraṇyakas*, and others called *Upanishads* or *Vedāntas* (so called from their being the concluding portions of each Veda), which expound the mystical sense of some of the ceremonies, and discuss the nature of the godhead, and final liberation.[1]

The Brāhmaṇas as they now exist are of much later date than the hymns of the Vedas, and give a picture of the religion of the Aryans that belongs to the time when priest-craft had elaborated religious ceremonial to an almost impossible degree. On this account any clear picture of the religion of the early Aryans is not to be expected in the Brāhmaṇas. But while the Brāhmaṇas in their present form belong unmistakably to a later age than the collections of hymns to which they are appended, there is in them much of very great antiquity. Dr. K. S. Macdonald summarises their value well in his *Brahmaṇas of the Vedas*:

[1] MUIR'S *Sanskrit Texts*, vol. i, p. 2. (Second edition.)

In the Brāhmaṇas there is much that is older than any of the mantras, things, such as myths, legends, stories, to which the mantras clearly allude. In the mantras the ancient Rishis do not tell the stories they refer to, because to them they are things well known requiring no telling—as, for example, the story of Śunaḥśepha, the various accounts of the creation, etc. The Rishis knew these and took for granted that their audiences knew them, so they merely allude to them in their songs or hymns. Thus, some of the contents of the Brāhmaṇas, constituting folk-lore and mythical and legendary stories, some others of the sacrifices, as also their ideas of the gods, may be and most likely are older than any of the hymns which have come down to us. But this much is certain, that the Brāhmaṇas are the oldest *prose*, compositions now extant, of the Aryan family.[1]

The Āraṇyakas and Upanishads are the supreme contribution of Brahmanism to the thought of the world.

Aranyakas and Upanishads

Professedly the Āraṇyakas, or 'forest teachings', were designed to prepare the pupil for the life of a devotee secluded from the distractions of worldly existence in some forest. The term *upanishad* seems to denote 'secret instruction', only given to a fully-qualified pupil by his teacher, to introduce him to the highest modes of philosophic thought, leading up to that supreme knowledge which insures liberation from human existence.

Although by conventional opinion the Upanishads are part of the Veda, the end of the Veda, or Vedānta, they belong to a date much later than the hymns of the Rig-veda, and represent philosophic and religious conceptions different from those of the Aryans. Even

[1] K. S. MACDONALD, *Brahmanas of the Vedas*, p. 7.

the earliest, the *Bṛihadāranyaka, Chhāndogya, Taittirīya, Aitareya, Kaushītaki* and *Kena* Upanishads, though always held to belong to *Śruti* or Revelation are outside the scope of an inquiry into the religion of the early Aryans. The composition of hymns must have ceased at an early date, and though some hymns not included in the Rig-veda gained acceptance among the priests and appeared in the later Samhitās, they are comparatively few. On the other hand apparently no hesitation was felt about the extension of the Brāhmaṇas, and though some, perhaps many of them have been lost, they form a large literature by themselves. They are sometimes spoken of as sixty or seventy in number and the Upanishads connected with them are said to be as many.

The Brāhmaṇas being in prose, they were, therefore not so readily learned by rote as if they had been in verse. It will be obvious, then, that, as they increased in number, and as the number of subjects taught by the sages were multiplied, their disciples had to find a method that would insure the faithful memory of essential rules and doctrines. Hence series of aphorisms, strings of aphorisms, or *Sūtras* were formulated, reduced to the utmost brevity, indeed so condensed that they are all but unintelligible.

The Sutras

They are not considered parts of the direct divine revelation (*śruti*). Tradition (*smṛiti*) begins with them.

These aids to memory are not literature in any true sense. They are simply outline manuals for keeping alive in the pupil's memory the details of the subjects that they deal with, the subjects of a Hindu Sanskrit student's education. They were usually summed up

under six heads, called the *Vedāngas*, or 'members of the body' of the Veda. Of the six, *kalpa*, ceremonial, is the most important, including three groups of *Sūtras*: the *Śrauta Sūtras*, which deal with sacrifices, summarizing the teaching of the Brāhmaṇas; the *Gṛihya* or Smārta *Sūtras*, which deal with the ceremonies connected with family life; and the *Dharma Sūtras*, which provide rules of conduct for the various classes of men and the various stages of their life.[1]

It may be noted that as the Brahmanical schools grew in number each drew up its own series of Sūtras, and that the *Sūtras* of the Sanskrit grammarian Pāṇini, who lived about three hundred years before the Christian era are included in the traditional literature of Brahmanic Hinduism. From their date and character it is clear that these Sūtras cannot help to the understanding of the early Aryan faith.

The origin of the Vedas

Till a short time ago, perhaps even at the present day, the popular belief among Hindus as to the origin of the Vedas was that they were eternally existent in the mind of the Supreme, and made manifest by him in each *kalpa*. The *kalpas* here referred to are the periods into which, according to Hindu reckoning, the time is divided. Such a *kalpa* is a 'day of Brahmā,' and a 'day of Brahmā' consists of a thousand *yugas* or ages, amounting altogether to four hundred and thirty-two million years of mortals.[2]

At the beginning of each *kalpa* all the existing universe is created and the Vedas are supposed then to be reveal-

[1] FARQUHAR, *Primer of Hinduism*, p. 59.

[2] MONIER WILLIAMS, *Sanskrit-English Dictionary*, p. 213 a.

ed by Brahmā through the rishis. At the close of the *kalpa* all the existing universe is destroyed and then there is a new creation and a new revelation in the new *kalpa*.

Traditions in the Sacred Books

The sacred books of Hinduism contain many variations of this popular belief, and some theories of the origin of the Vedas that are quite different. Some of these are matter of fact, as when the poets speak of themselves as having made and framed their hymns as a village joiner makes a cart. Some of them belong to the vast collection of stories concerning the gods, which makes them the authors of the sacred books in the same way that they were the creators of the world. Some are plainly symbolic, such as that which calls Vāch, the goddess of speech, the mother of the Vedas or says that they sprang from the 'leavings of sacrifice'. The sages themselves distinguish between new hymns and old; but, as it is not possible to discern positively which of the Vedic hymns are the oldest, it is not possible to arrange the various assertions that they contain in any historical order, or even to trace with any confidence, the relation of the various legends, and the only conclusion to which impartial investigation leads is that among all these various, and often inconsistent statements there is no one account of the origin of the hymns that was generally received when or soon after the hymns were composed.[1]

And yet, though there is not sufficient evidence to show the exact occasion of any single hymn in the whole collection, there are many hints and allusions in the hymns, and when noted they give at least some general

[1] A somewhat detailed account of these traditions will be found in Appendix I.

idea of the way in which the various collections came into existence is reached. What happened seems to have been as follows.

All nations in the earlier stage of their civilization regard the utterances of the man who has the gift of poetic song with awe, considering such songs to be the expression of the will of the beings of the mysterious spirit world, or a means to affect their will.

The compilation of the Rig-veda

When the bard's songs took the form of prayers and entreaties for the favour of the god on the tribe in hunting or war, or for rain in time of drought, or for children to increase the strength of the tribe before its enemies, or for health in time of pestilence and there was what seemed to be an answer to the petition, the fame of the poet grew great and the wonderful words that had secured blessing were treasured as a spell, or *mantra*, and so it came about that victory in battle was often ascribed to the virtue of some hymn. Thus it is said in the Rig-veda, vii. 33. 3, 'So did Indra preserve Sudās in the battle of the ten kings through your prayers, O Vasiṣṭhas.'

Sometimes such hymns were remembered and chanted on other occasions by the singer himself. Sometimes it was a follower or servant or pupil or disciple who learned them by rote. Many of these spells were lost after a generation or two. But those that were identified with some special occasion, especially those that had been first uttered at some recurring sacrifice were repeated when the sacrifice was again performed. The Aryans from the most ancient times had offered such sacrifices, though they had no temples and no images, and hymns were always recited at them.

And so hymns which had first been uttered on the occasion of some great need became part of the regular ritual, of sacrifice, as charms that had already proved powerful and might again secure divine response. The more notable of them were thus handed down by the descendants of the original bard, and preserved in the families that grew to be the great priestly families of later ages when there were separate orders of priests. Reference to the hymns of the Rig-veda will show traces of this. While the first book of the Rig-veda is called the book of the Śatarchins, that is the book of the 'hundred authors', some of the other books are each largely ascribed to a single seer (*ṛishi*). For example almost every hymn in the second book is ascribed to the rishi Gṛitsamada; most of the hymns in the third book are said to have been composed by the rishi Viśvāmitra; forty out of the fifty-eight hymns in the fourth book are ascribed to the rishi Vāmadeva, son of Gotama; most of the hymns in the sixth book are the work of Bharadvāja; and all the hymns of the seventh book are ascribed to the rishi Vasiṣṭha. The names of these rishis may be taken as the names of ancestors of the priestly families that arose as the Aryans settled in the country known as Kurukshetra, in the plain between the rivers Sutlej and Jumna.

These hymns were then gradually gathered into one great collection by some college of priests, to guard it from change and destruction as religious ceremonial became more elaborate and the priests became more and more scrupulous to use the exact words of the ancients, which were even in those early days probably ceasing to be entirely intelligible to the ordinary folk

and therefore liable to alteration. Thus the Rig-veda was compiled.

There was more than one edition of this great collection, but the one that has come down to us is that of the Śākalas.

Probably at first none of these editions was written. Dr. Buhler argues that writing may have been introduced into India by Phœnician traders coming by way of Mesopotamia into India about 800 B. C., but references to writing in ancient India are late and rare, in no case earlier than the fourth century before Christ, and perhaps not very long before the date of the Asokan inscriptions (257 to 231 B. C.). Discussing this Max Müller says that there is not one single allusion in the hymns of the Rig-veda to anything connected with writing. Pure Brahmans never speak of their *granthas* or books. They speak of their *Veda*, which means 'knowledge'. They speak of their *Śruti*, which means what they have heard with their ears. They speak of *Smṛiti*, which means what their fathers have declared unto them. We meet with *Brāhmaṇas*, i. e. the sayings of Brahmans; with *Sūtras*, i. e. the strings of rules; with *Vedāṅgas*, i. e. the members of the Veda; with *Pravachanas*, i. e. preachings; with *Sāstras*, i. e. teachings; with *Darśaṇas*, i.e. demonstrations; but we never meet with a book, or a volume, or a page.[1]

The transmission of the Veda

As Professor Macdonell points out sacred learning in India was for very many centuries, indeed until modern times, quite independent of writing. And Dr. Bloomfield

[1] MAX MULLER, *Ancient Sanskrit Literature*, pp. 497, 512.

holds that Vedic tradition is in this respect the most remarkable in recorded history. There is not one inscription, building, monument, coin, jewel, or utensil from Vedic times. The manuscripts of the Vedas that exist are of comparatively recent date for the early manuscripts perished centuries ago in the furious Indian climate, and of those now existing only a few date back to the fourteenth century of our era and only a very few go back to the twelfth. Yet here is 'one of the curiosities of Hindu religious life.' The adherents of each Veda or Vedic school, no matter whether the text of that school was reduced to writing or not, in theory ought to, and in fact many do, actually know their texts by heart. These are the so-called *Śrotriyas* or 'Oral Traditionists'. They live to this day, being, as it were, living manuscripts of their respective Vedas. 'The eminent Hindu scholar, the late Shankar Pandurang Pandit, tells us in the preface to his great Bombay edition of the Atharva-veda how he used three of these oral reciters of the Atharva-veda out of a total of only four that were at that time still alive in the Dekkhan; and how their oral authority proved to be quite as weighty as the written authority of his manuscripts. These living manuscripts were respectively, Messrs. Bapuji Jivanram, Kesava Bhat bin Daji Bhat; and Venkan Bhatji, the last the most celebrated Atharva Vaidika in the Dekkhan.'[1]

It is in this way that sacred learning in India, through all the centuries till modern times, has been independent of writing. Hymns, rules, speculations have always been learned from the lips of a spiritual teacher (*guru*) not from a manuscript.

[1] BLOOMFIELD, *Religion of the Veda*, pp. 21-2.

The later sacred books, especially the Upanishads give glimpses of how this learning was imparted, and it is easy to picture what took place. Max Müller's description is true of disciples in the sacred colleges to-day, as it was of their predecessors in the forest hermitages three thousand years ago.

How the disciple learned

How then was the Veda learnt? It was learnt by every Brahman during twelve years of his studentship or Brahmāchārya. This, according to Gautama, was the shortest period, sanctioned only for men who wanted to marry and to become Gṛihasthas. Brahmans who did not wish to marry were allowed to spend forty-eight years as students. The Prātiśākhya gives us a glimpse into the lecture-rooms of the Brahmanic Colleges. 'The Guru,' it is said, 'who has himself formerly been a student, should make his pupils read. He himself takes his seat either to the east, or the north, or the north-east. If he has no more than one or two pupils, they sit at his right-hand. If he has more, they place themselves according as there is room. They then embrace their master and say, "Sir read!" The master gravely says, "Om," i.e. "Yes". He then begins to say a *praśna* (a question), which consist of three verses. In order that no word may escape the attention of his pupils, he pronounces all with the high accent, and repeats certain words twice, or he says "so" (*iti*) after these words.'

It does not seem as if several pupils were allowed to recite together, for it is stated distinctly that the Guru first tells the verses to his pupil on the right, and that every pupil, after his task is finished, turns to the right, and walks round the tutor. This must occupy a long time every day, considering that a lecture consists of sixty or more *praśnas*, or of about 180 verses. The pupils are not dismissed till the lecture is finished.

At the end of the lecture, the tutor, after the last half-verse is finished says, 'Sir,' the pupil replies 'Yes, sir.' He then repeats the proper verses and formulas, which have to be repeated at the end of every reading, embraces his tutor, and is allowed to withdraw.

A Brahman was not only commanded to pass his years of student life in the house of a Guru and to learn from his mouth all that a Brahman ought to know, he was also accused if he presumed to acquire sacred learning from written sources. In the Mahābhārata we read: 'Those who sell the Vedas, and even those who write them, those also who defile them, they shall go to hell.' Kumārila says: 'That knowledge of the truth is worthless which has been acquired from the Veda, if the Veda has not been rightly comprehended, if it has been learned from writing, or has been received from a Sudra.'[1]

It was in this way that the Rig-veda grew out of the isolated songs and spells of the bards or singers of the first small clans of Aryan invaders of the north-west Panjab till it included, as it is to-day, 1,017 hymns and 11 supplementary hymns; 1,028 hymns in all, the supreme Scripture of the priests and thinkers of a continent.

Date of Vedas

From what has already been said it will be evident that no dates can be assigned to the origin of the hymns that make up the Vedas. Indeed it is necessary to go further and to say that there is not sufficient evidence to show with any precision when the hymns of the four Vedas were collected together and the Vedas themselves, as we have them were formed. Max Müller estimates that the hymns of Rig-veda were already much, as we now have them

[1] MAX MULLER, *Ancient Sanskrit Literature*, pp. 502-6 (abridged).

about 1500 B. C.[1] In his *Hibbert Lectures* he expresses the opinion that the collection was closed about 1000 B. C. The Brāhmaṇas may date from 800 to 600 B. C. The Sūtras may range from 600 to 200 B. C.[2]

Macdonell is content to say that the Vedic period perhaps begins as early as 1500 B. C.; that the kernel of Vedic tradition, as represented by the Rig-veda, has come down to us, with a high degree of fixity and remarkable care for verbal integrity, from a period which can scarcely be less remote than 1000 B. C.; and that the Samhitā text must have been as we have it about 600 B. C.[3]

Dr. Maurice Bloomfield, who compiled the huge Concordance of the Vedas which was published in 1906 after mentioning that the Buddha died about 487 B. C. says:

> Unquestionably a century or two must have passed between the conclusion of the Vedic period and the beginnings of Buddhism. Buddhist literature presupposes Brahmanical literature and religion in a stage of considerable advancement beyond the Vedas. We are, therefore, reasonably safe in saying that the real Vedic period was concluded about 700 B. C. We are further on safe ground in demanding a number of centuries for the much stratified language, literature, and religion of the Veda. But how many? It is as easy to imagine three as thirteen or twenty-three. Only one thing is certain. Vedic ideas are very old. I have noted the fact that the concept *rat*, 'cosmic or universal order' is found in cut and dried Iranian names in Western Asia as early as 1600 B. C. I am, for my part, and, I think I voice many scholars, now much

[1] *India, what can it teach us?* p. 53.
[2] *Hibbert Lectures*, p. 340.
[3] *Sanskrit Literature*, pp. 8, 47, 50.

more inclined to listen to an early date, say 2000 B. C., for the beginnings of Vedic literary production, and to a much earlier date for the beginnings of the institutions and religious concepts which the Veda has derived from those prehistoric times which cast their shadows forward into the records that are in our hands. Anyhow, we must not be beguiled by that kind of conservatism which merely salves the conscience into thinking that there is better proof for any later date, such as 1500, 1200, or 1000 B. C. rather than the earlier date of 2000 B.C. Once more, frankly, we do not know.[1]

The following table will probably give as clear a view of the growth of Vedic literature, with an approximate idea of the time when it was created, as with our present knowledge it is possible to gain :—

[1] BLOOMFIELD, *Religion of the Veda*, p. 19.

Growth of the Vedic Literature up to 600 B.C.

External events	Indian History	Religion	Literature		
The people of Israel leave Egypt. About 1320 B.C.	The Aryans in the Panjab.	The Priests gradually divided into Three Orders.	Gradual composition of the Hymns and compilation of the RIG-VEDA.	Compilation of the SAMA-VEDA.	Compilation of the YAJUR-VEDA.
The Greeks war on Troy.		Rise of Priestly Education.			
David, King of Israel. About 1000 B. C.	Aryans enter the country of the Kurus and Panchālas.	Theory of the Four Castes.			

The *Iliad* composed.	The Aryans in Kurukshetra.		THE BRAHMANAS	
4 Elijah, the Prophet, about 860 B.C.		Elaborate sacrificial ceremonialism.	*Pañchavimśa*	Gradual
			Taittirīya	Compilation
Beginnings of Roman nation.	The Aryans in the Middle Land.	Priestly supremacy.	*Talavakāra*	of the ATHARVA-VEDA.
			Kaushītaki	
Isaiah, the Prophet, 737 to 700 B.C.			*Aitareya*	
	Writing introduced		*Śatapatha*	
	Rise of the hermits.		*Gopatha*	

III. THE NATURE OF VEDIC GODS

NATURE'S drama is on an imposing scale in India. Sand-storm and cyclone, intense lightning, terrific thunder-claps, the heavy rush of rain in the monsoon, the swift flood in the stream that comes down from the hills, the scorching heat of the sun, the crackling red flames of the fire in the jungle, all witness to power beyond man's power.

The singers of the Aryans felt their own littleness before these forces, and 'in the faith of little children' they instinctively thought that action movement, creation, change and destruction in nature were the result of superhuman forces. And because they saw that all action in human life was caused by men and women, by persons, they attributed the action that they saw in nature to divine persons. There are thus many gods in the Vedas to account for such varied natural phenomena as the glorious brightness of the sun, the blaze of the sacrificial fire, the sweep of the rain-storm across the skies, the recurrence of the dawn, the steady currents of the winds, the violence of the tropical storm. Special interest attaches to the mythology of these gods as given or discerned in the Veda, 'because it represents an earlier stage of thought than is to be found in any other literature.'[1]

Nature worship

[1] MACDONELL, *Sanskrit Literature*, p. 67.

Speaking generally, the hymns appear to be the utterances of simple men, who, under the influence of the most impressive phenomena of nature, saw everywhere the presence and agency of divine powers. They imagined that each of the great provinces of the universe was ruled and pervaded by its own separate deity, and they had not yet risen to a clear idea of one supreme creator and governor of all things. This is shown not only by the special functions assigned to particular gods, but in many cases by the names which they bear, corresponding to those of some of the elements or of the celestial luminaries.

Four things strike the student of Vedic religious thought at once:

(i) There is complete absence of system in the theological ideas and the mythology of the hymns. There are over a thousand hymns in the Rig-veda. Of these about 250 are addressed to Indra, and 200 to Agni, while other gods have only a single hymn. But the most careful investigator cannot draw up a satisfactory reasoned statement of Vedic faith from any or all of them.

(ii) In this immense amount of verse, there are an enormous number of repetitions, inconsistencies and even contradictions.

(iii) In spite of the many allusions to the gods there is a great lack of clear descriptions of the separate deities. The Vedic gods are not defined. Attributes of one are ascribed to another. Speaking generally, 'the personifications being but slightly developed, lack definiteness of outline and individuality of character. . . . The character of each god is made up of only a few essential

qualities combined with many others which are common to all the gods, such as brilliance, power, beneficence, wisdom. These common attributes tend to obscure those which are distinctive.'[1]

(iv) A careful examination of the Vedic hymns shows also that the Aryans thought out for themselves different conceptions of the gods in the course of the centuries. Gods like Dyaus and Pṛithivī are passing away. Indra replaces Varuṇa. Vishnu is not as yet of importance. Śiva, Mahādeva, Dūrga, Kāli, Rāma, Krishna, Lakshmi, Ganapati are not as yet known. The triad (*Trimūrti*) of later Hinduism: Brahmā, Vishnu and Siva, is as yet unheard of. There are traces, perhaps the beginnings of the idea developed in the Upanishads that all the gods are one under different names, and there is the beginning of the belief in abstract deities, such as Shraddhā, devotion, Kāma, desire and especially in Prajāpati, the Lord of Creatures, which are distinct from the personified forces of fire and wind and rain and sun and sky that were the chief gods of the earlier Aryans. The speculations of the Upanishads are, of course, declared to be part of the Veda, but though verses and phrases may be extracted from the Vedic hymns to justify even the most advanced monism there is a real gulf between the beliefs enshrined in the hymns and the teaching of the sages of later days.

The Devas

The ordinary word in the Vedas for god is *Deva*, and the original idea of the word *deva* is 'bright'. The universal Indo-European word for 'god' was *deivos*, which appears in very archaic

[1] MACDONELL, *Sanskrit Literature*, p. 69.

Latin as *deivos*, and later becomes *deus*. *Devos* in the Gallic proper name *Devog-nata* is its Celtic form. In Old Scandinavian *tivar* means 'gods'. In Lithuanian the form *dëvas* is found, which is in Sanskrit *deva*. This noun is connected with the verb *div*, *dyu*, 'shine', the shining of the sun and of the moon. Its use shows that the Indo-Europeans derived their first and most pervasive conception of divine power from the brightness of the sun.[1]

Max Müller explains picturesquely how this word came to be used to designate the gods.

> *Deva* meant originally bright, and nothing else. Meaning bright, it was constantly used of the sky, the stars, the sun, the dawn, the day, the spring, the rivers, the earth; and when a poet wished to speak of all these by one and the same word—by what we should call a general term—he called them all *Devas*. When that had been done, *Deva* did no longer mean 'the Bright ones,' but the name comprehended all the qualities which the sky and the sun and the dawn shared in common excluding only those that were peculiar to each.
>
> Here you see how, by the simplest process, the *Devas*, the bright ones, might become and did become the *Devas*, the heavenly, the kind, the powerful, the invisible, the immortal—and in the end something very like the *theoi* or *dii* of Greeks and Romans.[2]

It is useless to attempt to say how many gods were worshipped by the early Aryans. They are generally spoken of as 'thrice-eleven' or 'thirty-three.'[3]

The number of the Devas

> Ye gods, who are eleven in the sky, who are eleven on earth, and who in your glory are eleven dwellers

[1] BLOOMFIELD, *Religion of the Veda*, p. 109.

[2] MAX MULLER, *India: What can it teach us?* pp. 218-9.

[3] *Rig-veda*, i. 34. 11; viii. 30. 2.

in the (atmospheric) waters, do ye welcome this our offering.[1]

The 'thirty-three' did not include all.

With all the deities, three times eleven, here in close alliance with the Maruts, Bhṛigus, Floods;
Accordant, of one mind with Sūrya and with dawn.
O Aśvins, drink the Soma-juice.[2]

A much larger number is mentioned by a seer who is honouring Agni, who declares:

Three times a hundred gods and thrice a thousand, and three times ten and nine have worshipped Agni.[3]

Another says:

The deities, three thousand and three hundred and thirty-nine have served and honoured Agni.[4]

Probably the general conception was merely that there were many gods and is better expressed in an earlier hymn.

Glory to gods the mighty and the lesser, glory to gods the younger and the elder;
Let us, if we have power, pay the gods worship; no better prayer than that, ye gods, acknowledge.[5]

Dual Deities

One other peculiarity of Aryan mythology deserves notice. The names of two gods, such as Mitra and Varuṇa who had some characteristics alike were often formed into one compound noun (with a dual termination) and this compound became the name of a new deity. Thus there are hymns to Mitra and Varuṇa, and also to Mitrā-

[1] *Rig-veda* i. 139. 11.
[2] *Rig-veda*, viii, 35, 3.
[3] *Rig-veda* iii. 9. 9.
[4] *Rig-veda* x. 52. 6.
[5] *Rig-veda* i. 27, 13.

varuṇau as one. The name of 'Heaven and Earth' (*Dyāvā pṛithivī*) is the most common of these compounds, of which there are about eighteen altogether.

It will be remembered that, in the later Puranic mythology, the legend of a deity half Vishnu and half Śiva known as Harihara has an important place. The earlier Vedic practice may have furnished a precedent for it.

The collective Deities

Sometimes all the gods are comprehended by one common name, *Visve Devas*, the All-gods, and prayers are addressed to them in their collective capacity.

Origin and immortality of the Devas

The Vedic poets constantly speak of the gods as immortal, just as the Greek poets did. On the other hand, immortality is said to have been conferred on the *devas* by individual gods like Agni and Savitṛi or obtained by drinking *Soma*, or won by practising austerity (*tapas*) or by sacrifice.

Indra and other gods are spoken of as unaging, but whether their immortality was considered by the poets to be unending there is, says Macdonell, no clear evidence in the Vedas. In the later literature the existence of the devas, like that of the whole universe, is limited to a cosmic age or *kalpa*.[1]

There is similar vagueness about the origin of the gods. In many passages the gods are described as the offspring of the earth, sometimes as the offspring of other gods. Ushas, the dawn, is called the mother of the gods and Brāhmanaspati their father. Soma is said to be the

[1] *Sanskrit Literature*, p. 71.

generator of Heaven, Earth, Agni, Sūrya, Indra and Vishnu. By an extreme paradox, Indra is said to have begotten his father and mother from his own body. There is no settled order. The same god is sometimes described as supreme over all other gods, and at other times as beneath them. There are as yet no regular genealogies, or marriages such as one finds in the Puraṇas. The father in one hymn may be the son in another; the brother becomes husband; the goddess described as the mother of a god in one, is his wife in another. No general statement can, therefore, be made. It was left to later times to trace all to a common origin in Brahmā, the creator or to Iśvara the creative personal force of the impersonal Parabrahmā.

Character of the Devas

The Physical appearance of Vedic gods is supposed to be like that of men. Head, face, eyes, arms, hands, feet and other portions of human frame are all ascribed to them. But their forms are shadowy and their features or limbs are often used figuratively for their activities. Thus the tongue and limbs of Agni, the fire-god, are flames; the arms of Sūrya, the sun-god, are rays of light. There is no reason to think that the Aryans made images; certainly idols or images of the gods, or temples implying images are not named in the Rig-veda.

Anthropomorphisms are very common. Some of the gods are described as mail-clad warriors, helmeted, armed with mace and spear and bow, riding in luminous cars. Some of them, especially Indra, delight in the intoxicating Soma juice and in war. They are angry, seek to revenge insults or neglect, rejoice in sacrificial offerings. They go out on martial expeditions. They help the

Aryans against the Dasyus, and the Aryans, successful in their conquests, naturally thought of the gods as beneficent. Among the gods the only deity in whom injurious features are at all prominent is Rudra.[1]

The gods of the early Aryans are far more like the warrior gods of the Norsemen than the deities that succeeded them in the later ages of Hinduism. The more detailed accounts of individual gods given below will enable the student to form his own opinion, but in general terms it can scarcely be better stated than in the words of Professor Macdonell.

> The character of the Vedic gods is also moral. They are 'true' and 'not deceitful', being throughout the friends and guardians of honesty and virtue. But the divine morality only reflects the ethical standard of an early civilization. Thus even the alliance of Varuṇa, the most moral of the gods, with righteousness is not such as to prevent him from employing craft against the hostile and the deceitful man. Moral elevation is, on the whole, a less prominent characteristic of the gods than greatness and power.[2]

Classification of the deities

It is very difficult to arrange the gods of the Vedic seers in any distinct classes because the worshippers of those gods themselves did not distinguish very clearly between them. Later thinkers easily read their own ideas into the words of earlier and simpler days. For instance, Yāska, in his Nirukta, the oldest commentary on the Vedas now in existence, says: 'There are three deities, namely, Agni, whose place is on earth; Vāyu, or Indra, whose place is in the air; and Sūrya, the sun, whose

[1] MACDONELL, *Sanskrit Literature*, p. 72.
[2] *Sanskrit Literature*, p. 73.

place is in the sky.' 'These gods might all be one as a priest receives various names at various sacrifices.' 'Or,' says he, 'it may be, these gods are all distinct beings, for the praises addressed to them are distinct, and their appellations also.' These theosophic speculations certainly were not accepted by most of the Vedic rishis, still less by the people who heard their songs at fairs and festivals. They divided their chief gods into three groups, according as they had their principal activity in the upper region of light, in the atmosphere or on the earth. These three groups were called the Upper, Middle and Lower. There were however many other divinities whom they worshipped or feared, and a seven-fold classification is, perhaps, as useful as any, provided that it is always remembered that such a classification is not rigid and does not mean that the Aryans believed in so many separate orders of divine beings. According to it the Vedic gods rank as follows:

i. Gods of the Upper World: Dyaus, Varuṇa, Sūrya, Savitṛi, Pūshan, Vishnu, Ushas, Mitra, Aryaman and the Aśvins.

ii. Gods of the Air: Vāta, Indra, Rudra, Parjanya, the Bhṛigus and the Maruts.

iii. Gods of the Earth: Agni, Soma, Yama, and Pṛithivī.

iv. Abstract deities: Aditi, Prajāpati, Sraddhā, Vāch, Bṛihaspati, Ka, Kāma, Viśvedevas.

v. Inferior deities such as Tvaṣtar, the Ṛibhus, the Gandhavars.

vi. Demon deities such as the Rākshasas.

vii. Ancestral spirits or Pitṛis.

But though such a classification is justifiable, each Vedic poet seems to exalt the particular god whom he happens to be singing to a position of supremacy and to endow him with all the attributes of supremacy. It would be easy to find, in the numerous hymns of the Veda, passages in which almost every single god is represented as supreme and absolute. In the first hymn of the second book of the Rig-veda, Agni is called the ruler of the universe, the lord of men, the wise king, the father, the brother, the son, and friend of men; nay, all the powers and names of the others are distinctly ascribed to Agni. Indra is celebrated as the strongest god in the hymns as well as in the Brāhmaṇas, and the burden of one of the songs of the tenth book is; *Viśvasmād Indra uttarah.* 'Indra is greater than all.' Of Soma it is said that he was born great, and that he conquers every one. He is called the king of the world; he has the power to prolong the life of men, and is the maker of heaven and earth, of Agni, of Sūrya, of Indra and Vishnu. In the very next hymn, addressed to Varuṇa, it is Varuṇa who is, to the mind of the poet, supreme and all-mighty.[1]

Henotheism

In his writings Max Müller constantly referred to this and coined the word, *henotheism*, or *kathenotheism* to express what he regarded as a 'peculiar character of the ancient Vedic religion.' It denotes that each of several divinities is regarded as supreme, and worshipped without reference to the rest; or that the seers held at the belief in individual gods alternately or for the time

[1] MAX MULLER, *Ancient Sanskrit Literature*, pp. 533, 534.

being regarded as highest the one that was being worshipped, and that they therefore treated him as if he were absolutely independent and supreme, alone present to the mind of his worshipper. More modern scholars do not, however, consider this practice so remarkable as Max Müller did. They regard it more as a species of poetic license, by which a singer magnified the god whom he was invoking, rather than an evidence that the poet actually claimed that the god whom he was then reverencing was the superior of all others.

It must also be remembered that the minds of those early singers were not unlikely to attribute to the god whom they were adoring the characteristics of other gods of the same group when all were much alike.

For instance, Dyaus was the sky as the ever-present light; Varuṇa was the sky as all-embracing or all containing; Mitra was the sky as lighted up by the morning. Sūrya was the sun as shining in the sky. Savitṛi was the sun as bringing light and life. Agni was fire and light. Vishnu was the sun as striding with three steps across the sky. Indra appeared in the sky as the giver of rain; Rudra and the Maruts passed along the sky in thunder-storms; Vāta and Vāyu were the winds of the air.

Hence it happens constantly that what is said of one deity can be and is appropriately said of another; the same epithets are shared by many; the same stories are told of different gods.

In reaction against such confusion a kind of monotheism, an anticipation of the later Vedanta, appears in a few verses. It amounts to a suggestion that in reality all the gods are one.

One poet says:

> They call him Indra, Mitra, Varuṇa, Agni, and he is heavenly, nobly-winged Garutmân (i.e. the sun).
> To what is one, sages give many a title: they call it Agni, Yama, Mātariśvan.[1]

And a verse in the Atharva-veda is as emphatic:

> In the evening Agni becomes Varuṇa; he becomes Mitra when rising in the morning; having become Savitṛi he passes through the sky; having become Indra he warms the heaven in the middle.

It thus becomes quite natural that Sūrya, the sun, should be identified with Indra and Agni; Savitṛi with Mitra and Pushan; Indra with Varuṇa: and Dyaus the sky, with Parjanya, the rain-god.[2]

[1] *Rig-veda* i. 164. 46.
[2] *Atharva-veda* xiii. 3. 13.

IV. A CLASSIFIED ACCOUNT OF THE VEDIC GODS

I. THE GODS OF THE UPPER WORLD OR HEAVEN

Dyaus

THE oldest among the gods that the Aryans worshipped was Dyaus, and he was probably revered by the ancestors of the Aryans long before any Aryans had journeyed to India. The word Dyaus is identical with the Greek *Zeus*, and *Dyaush-pitar*, the 'heavenly father' is the same as the Greek *Zeus-pater* and the Latin *Jupiter*. The same name in a different form, *Tiu* or *Ziu*, was used by the Aryans who made their way into the forests of Germany. The ancient Norsemen worshipped the same god as *Tyr*.

In the Rig-veda Dyaus is the sky regarded as the father of all. Pṛithivī, the earth, is often named as his consort, the pair being celebrated in six hymns as universal parents of gods and men. In a few passages Dyaus is called a bull, ruddy and bellowing, referring to the lightning and the thunder. In allusion to the starry sky he is called a black steed decked with pearls. But the fame of Dyaus was on the wane even in very early Vedic times and the names of other less ancient gods took the place of his in Vedic worship.

Varuna

Varuṇa, like Dyaus, is another god of the earliest Aryans. He is the sky, as encompassing all things, one 'who envelops like darkness.' The name is identical with the Greek *Ouranos*, 'the heavens.'

Varuṇa, is the great upholder of order, physical and moral (*rita*); he dwells in all worlds as ruler; he ordains the change of day and night, opens paths for the sun, causes rivers to flow, provides that the rivers shall not overfill the ocean, knows the flight of birds, beholds all things open and secret, watches over the world, punishes the evil doer, and forgives the sins of those who implore his pardon.

Varuṇa has a moral character higher than that of any other deity.

While in hymns to the other divinities long life, wealth, power are the objects commonly prayed for purity, forgiveness of sin, freedom from further sinning is sought from Varuṇa with humble confessions of guilt and repentance. It is a sore grief to the singers to know that man daily transgresses Varuṇa's commands; they acknowledge that without his aid they are not masters of themselves for a single moment; they fly to him for refuge from evil, expressing at the same time all confidence that their prayers will be heard and granted.

Thus one seer sings:

> O Varuṇa whatever the offence may be
> That we as men commit against the heavenly folk
> When through our want of thought we violate the laws
> Chastise us not, O God, for that iniquity.[1]

[1] *Rig-veda*, vii. 89. 5.

Other beautiful prayers from the Rig-veda are quoted in the Readings. In the Atharva-veda, also illimitable knowledge is ascribed to Varuṇa:

> Varuṇa, the great lord of these worlds, sees as if he were near. When any man thinks he is doing aught by stealth, the gods know it all; (and they perceive) every one who stands or walks or hides, if he goes to lie down or into any lurking place. What two people sitting together whisper to each other, King Varuṇa knows it; he is there as the third. This earth, too, belongs to Varuṇa, the King, and this wide sky with its ends far apart. The two seas (the sky and the ocean) are Varuṇa's loins; he is also curtained in this small drop of water. He who should flee far beyond the sky, even he would not escape Varuṇa, the King. His spies proceed from heaven towards this world; with thousand eyes they overlook this earth. King Varuṇa sees all this, what is between heaven and earth, and what is beyond. He has counted the twinklings of the eyes of men. As a player throws down the dice, he settles all things.[1]

In later Hinduism Varuṇa, like Dyaus, ceases to be the supreme beneficent and righteous ruler and appears merely as a god of the ocean. With his disappearance there would seem to have gone from Indian religious life what might have been a great impulse towards righteousness. The significance of this is more fully dealt with in the section on the Legacy of Vedic religion.

Mitra, 'the friend', the kindly sun, is often worshipped with Varuṇa in the Vedic hymns. They then jointly rule day and night, uphold the heavens and the earth, guard the good and punish the guilty.

[1] *Atharva-veda*, iv. 16. 1-5.

Mitra

Mitra is one of the Ādityas and in the Vedas is generally associated with Varuṇa: he is seldom mentioned alone. Sāyaṇa says, 'Mitra is the god who presides over the day, and Varuṇa is the god who rules over the night.' Mitra is the same as the Persian Mithra. The name means 'the friend' and seems to refer to the kindly power of the sun, and the early Aryans must have worshipped the sun in this character before the Persian and Indian branches of the Aryans separated. Mitra and Varuṇa have much the same attributes though Mitra has not the moral power that Varuṇa has.

Only one hymn is addressed to Mitra without Varuṇa. In it the worshipping sage proclaims his sure faith in Mitra's goodness:

> Mitra uttering his voice calls men to activity. Mitra sustains the earth and the sky. Mitra with unwinking eye beholds (all) creatures. Mitra, son of Aditi, may the mortal who worships thee with sacred rites have food. He who is protected by thee is neither slain nor conquered. Calamity does not reach him from near or far.
>
> *Rig-veda*, iii. 59.

Surya

Sūrya, the sun god, worshipped by the Greeks as Helios, is in one hymn styled the son of Dyaus: in another he is called the son of Aditi. Ushas 'the dawn' is in one place said to be his wife, while in another she is described as his mother. He moves in a car which is sometimes said to be drawn by seven fleet and ruddy

mares. He rolls up darkness like a hide. Pūshan goes as his messenger with his golden ships, which sail in the aerial ocean. Sūrya is the preserver and soul of all things stationary and moving and is, therefore, called 'all creating'; enlivened by him men perform their work; he is far-seeing, all-seeing, beholds all creatures, and the good and bad deeds of mortals. By his greatness he is the divine leader of the gods. He is often described as a bird or eagle flying through space. The epithets 'architect of the universe' *Viśvakarman*, and 'possessed of all divine attributes', *Viśvadevyat*, are applied to him.

In many passages, however, the dependent position of Sūrya is asserted. He is said to have been caused to shine by Indra, who also once carried off one of the wheels of his chariot. Mitra and Varuṇa sometimes conceal him by clouds and rain.

In the Rāmayana, Sanjnā, the daughter of Viśvakarma, is the wife of Sūrya. The Aśvins and Yama and Yamī are among his children. As his brightness was too great for his wife, Viśvakarma cut part of him away. The fragments fell blazing to the earth, and from them Viśvakarma formed the discus of Vishnu, the trident of Śiva, and the weapons of the other gods.

Savitri

Savitṛi is sometimes distinguished from Sūrya, sometimes identified with him. The two names are sometimes employed indiscriminately to denote the same deity. Sāyaṇa says that the sun is called Savitṛi, before his rising and Sūrya from his rising to his setting.

The name is supposed to mean *Generator*, or *Stimulator* and refers to the life-giving power of the sun.

Savitṛi is pre-eminently the golden deity, being golden-eyed, golden-handed, golden-tongued, the yellow-haired. He wears golden armour and bright in his aspect, he ascends a golden car, drawn by radiant, brown, white-footed horses, and beholding all creatures, he persues an ascending and descending path. He is lord of all desirable things and sends blessings from the sky, from the atmosphere, and the earth. He removes evil dreams and drives off demons and sorcerers. He bestows immortality on the gods and prosperity on his worshippers.

The worship of Savitṛi has continued to the present time. It is to him that the Gāyatrī is addressed at his rising by every devout Brahman in his daily prayers (*sandhyā vandhanam*). This short verse is as follows:

Tat Savitur varenyam bhargo devasya dhimohi[1]
dhiyo yo naḥ prachodayāt—
May we attain that excellent glory of Savitṛi the god:
So may he stimulate our prayers.[1]

This verse was in its original use, a simple invocation of the sun to shed a benignant influence upon the customary offices of worship. But it came to be looked on as an omnipotent religious formula, sure to secure salvation from the round of births to the man who understands its inner meaning. In later Hinduism it is constantly extolled. Thus the *Skanda Purāṇa* declares:

Nothing in the Vedas is superior to the Gāyatrī. No invocation is equal to the Gāyatrī, as no city is

[1] *Rig-veda*, iii. 62. 10.

equal to Kāsi. The Gāyatrī is the mother of the Vedas and of Brahmans. By repeating it a man is saved. What is there indeed that cannot be effected by the Gāyatrī? For the Gāyatrī is Vishnu, Brahmā, and Śiva and the three Vedas.

Eleven hymns are addressed to Savitṛi in the Rig-veda.

Pushan

The word Pūshan comes from the root *push*, of which the primary idea is 'to nourish'. Pūshan is the protector and nourisher of cattle (*paśupā*). He was originally the sun as a god kind to shepherds. As a cowherd he carries an ox goad, and his car is drawn by goats. He is a guide and guardian of travellers on roads and journeys. He conducts the dead on the way to 'the fathers'. He is called the lover of his sister Sūryā a female form of the god Sūrya.

In later books he is represented as toothless, feeding on a kind of gruel, and the offerings made to him are, therefore, of ground in a mill. The cause of his being toothless is variously explained. One account is that at the Daksha sacrifice Rudra knocked out his teeth while he was eating the *purodaśa* offering.

Pūshan is adored in eight hymns of the Rig-veda.

Vishnu

In the Rig-veda Vishnu is a deity of the fourth rank, less frequently adored than Pūshan, and he is the only one of the great gods of the later Hindu triad (*trimūrti*) whose modern name appears in the Vedas. The name Vishnu seems to mean 'pervading'. He seems to have

been the sun thought of as swiftly traversing the three worlds or as rising, culminating and setting. Vishnu's three steps, two near the world of men and one, the highest, in the heaven of 'the fathers' and the devas, refer to these stations, or to him as passing over and protecting all. From this grew the story of the dwarf incarnation of Vishnu (*vāmana avatāra*) at the court of the arrogant king Bali. In Manu the name of Vishnu appears, but it is only in the later Hinduism of the Māhabhārata and the Purāṇas that Vishnu's supremacy is asserted. It need hardly be said that the Rig-veda contains no account of the incarnations of Vishnu.

Ushas

Ushas the goddess of dawn, the goddess Eos of the Greeks, is the only female deity invoked in the Veda with any frequency, and the only one to whom entire hymns, about twenty, are addressed. Ushas means 'shining one'. Ushas is daughter of the Sky, sister of the Ādityas, elder sister of Night, loved by Sūrya, but vanishing at the moment that he seeks to lay hold of her with his rays. Agni and the gods are said to wake at the sound of the hymns sung to her at daybreak.

The worship of the Aryan began at daybreak; Ushas, the dawn, is the earliest object of his morning songs and worshippers sometimes claim credit for arousing her. The promise of the day is hailed with overflowing and inspiring joy; the feeling of relief as the burden of darkness is lifted off the world, as the demons are driven away, and as the freedom and cheerfulness of the day commence again, prompts wonderful poetry, and

the songs to Ushas are among the finest in the Veda. She is addressed as a virgin in glittering robes, who chases away the darkness, or to whom her sister Night willingly yields her domain, who prepares a path for the sun; her appearance is the signal for the sacrifice; she rouses all beings from slumber, gives sight to the darkened, and power of motion to the prostrate and helpless. In the midst of such gladsome greetings, however the poet is reminded, by the thought of the many dawns that have thus shone upon the earth, and the many that are to follow them, of those, who, having witnessed the former ones are now passed away, and of those who shall welcome them when he is no more. So he is led to mournful reflections on the wasting away of life, as one day after another is subtracted from the time allotted to each mortal.[1]

Two Hymns (Rig-veda i. 113 and vii. 77) are quoted in the Readings from the Vedas and will give some idea of the devotion of the early Aryans towards this goddess. It is to be noticed that she received no share of the soma-offering; that there are few references to sacrifice in the hymns addressed to her; and that Indra is said to have crushed her chariot with his thunderbolt.

Aryaman

The name Aryaman means 'a devoted friend'. He is one of the sons of Aditi and is commonly invoked along with Varuṇa and Mitra. Like them he is a god of light, golden, pure, sinless, sleepless, many-eyed, a hater

[1] WHITNEY, *Oriental and Linguistic Studies*, 1st series, pp. 37–38.

of falsehood. He is better known than the Ādityas Bhaga, Aṁśa and Daksha, but has not the same eminence as the great Ādityas, Varuṇa, Mitra, Sūrya and Savitṛi.

The As'vins

The Aśvins are the twin gods of morning and evening twilight, or the morning and evening stars, sons of Aśvinī the wife of Sūrya who took the form of a mare.

The word means 'possessed of horses' 'a rider'. They are described as riding in a golden car, in which they are accompanied by the sun-maiden Sūryā, of whom they were the joint-husbands. They appear at dawn, yoke their car, and bring blessing to their worshippers. They are young and beautiful, swift as young falcons, and their car is drawn by birds or golden-winged horses. They are the guardians of the slow, and of the woman growing old unmarried. They are physicians giving sight to the blind, and health to the infirm. They are called the physicians of the gods. They renewed the youth of the sage Chyavāna, and when the leg of the royal lady-warrior Viśpalā had been cut off in battle they gave her an iron one instead. Many other similar miracles are related of them. In the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa (iv. 1.5.1) the Aśvins are rebuked by the other gods, because they 'have wandered about very familiarly among men,' and in the Mahābhārata, Śānti parva, verse 7589, they are called the Sūdras among the gods. But they are adored with fervent praises by the Vedic seers and they are even called the parents of Pūshan, the sun, because they precede his appearing.

II. THE GODS OF THE AIR

Vayu or Vata

Both Vāyu and Vāta mean 'wind' and Vāyu is god of the wind. He does not occupy a prominent place among the Vedic gods. In the Purusha-sūkta Vāyu is said to have sprung from the breath of Purusha. Vāyu is also called the son-in-law of Tvaṣṭṛi. He is said to travel in a shining car drawn by a pair of red or purple horses or by ninety-nine or even by a thousand horses, but to be invisible. Indra and Vāyu often occupy the same car. In conjunction with Indra Vāyu has the right to the first draught of the soma libation. He can protect or prolong life.

> The soul of gods, and of the world the offspring,
> This god according to his liking wanders,
> His sound is heard, but ne'er is seen his figure.
> This Vāta let us now with offerings worship.
>
> *Rig-veda*, x. 168. 3.

> And, Vāta, thou art our father, our brother, and our friend; cause us to live.
> From the treasure of immortality, which is deposited yonder in thy house, O Vāta, give us to live.
>
> *Rig-veda*, x. 186. 2.

Indra

Max Müller argued that because drops of rain were called *indu*, the god who sent them was called Indra, the 'rainer', the 'irrigator'. But it is perhaps more likely that the name Indra means 'strong, powerful'. Indra does not seem to have been worshipped by the Aryans before they came to India, but in India as lord of the thunderstorm he was the principal god of the

Vedic Aryans. Indra is said to be the son of Dyaus and Aditi in the later mythology. In one Vedic verse his mother is said to be Ekāshṭakā. In the Puruṣa Sūkta, Indra is said to have sprung with Agni from the mouth of Puruṣa and he is said to be one of several gods who were created by Soma.

He was at first only chief of the gods of the air and not originally ruler of such gods of the sky as Varuṇa and Dyaus. The Aryans had worshipped Dyaus and Varuṇa, the gods of the wide open sky before they came to India, but in India they found a land where the long hot season scorches the land and where drought and famine slay man and beast if the rain does not fall in due season. Perhaps they had worshipped a god of thunder in the Asiatic lands whence they had come, but whether that had been so or not, they now began to worship Indra, the god of the thunder-storm, with great earnestness; for to them it seemed that the thunder which so often precedes an Indian rain-storm was the sound of the conflict between the god of thunder and Vṛitra the demon of drought. In Indra's favour was life. Without it death by famine was certain. Speedily, therefore, after the Aryans had entered India, the god of thunder and rain became the chief deity in the Vedic pantheon, and one-fourth of the Rig-veda is in his honour.

The story of Indra's conflict with Vṛitra recurs again and again in the hymns, and Indra himself is described repeated. He is agile, strong, of irresistible might, handsome in face, with golden beard, and long-armed. He rides a golden car and carries a golden whip. Two swift steeds draw the car, created by the

Ṛibhus, and his weapon is the thunderbolt forged for him by Tvaṣṭṛi. It is of gold or iron, and sometimes is said to have a thousand points. Indra is also said to have bow and arrows, and a hook or goad (*ankusa*). He uses a net to enmesh his enemies. He drinks great draughts of soma-juice, even from the day of his birth, 'like a thirsty stag'. The intoxication of the soma stirs him 'like violent blasts'. He hurries off, escorted by the Maruts and sometimes accompanied by Vishṇu to do battle with his enemies, especially with Vṛittra. Heaven and earth quake with affright at the sound of his thunder. His enemy is pierced and shattered. The rain descends and the land is blessed. Sometimes the clouds are described as cities or fortresses of his enemies and Indra is said to overthrow them.

And so his praises are sung in countless passages :

> There is nothing unconquered by thee : no one like thee is known among the gods. No one yet to be born, or yet born, can rival thee. Do, great god, whatever thou willest to do.
>
> *Rig-veda*, 165. 9

His wife is Indrāṇī, but he has many other consorts. One hymn describes the exultation of Indrāṇī over her rival wives.

The two characteristics that stand out most clearly in the picture of Indra given in the Vedas are his delight in war and his love for the intoxicating soma-juice.

> As soon as he was born, the slayer of Vṛittra grasped his arrow and asked his mother: 'Who are they that are renowned as fierce warriors?'
>
> *Rig-veda*, viii. 45. 4.

On the day that thou wast born, thou didst, from love of it, drink the mountain juice of the Soma-plant. Of old, the youthful mother who bore thee, satiated thee with it in the house of thy mighty father.

Rig-veda, iii. 48. 2.

The sensations of the god after drinking soma are described in one of the hymns:

The draughts which I have drunk impel me like violent blasts. The five tribes of men appear to me not even as a mote: I have quaffed the soma. The two worlds do not equal one-half of me: I have quaffed the soma. One-half of me is in the sky, and I have drawn the other down. I have quaffed the soma.

Rig-veda, x. 119.

His victories are ascribed to the effects of the soma-juice.

These draughts inspired thee, O lord of the brave, these were vigour, these libations, in battles, when for the sake of the poet, the sacrificer, thou struckest down irresistibly ten thousands of enemies.

From battle to battle thou advancest bravely, from town to town thou destroyest all this with might, when thou, Indra, with him who makes the foe bow down (i.e. the thunderbolt) as thy friend, struckest down from afar the deceiver Namuchi (a demon of drought).

Rig-veda, i. 53.

In the later literature Indra becomes king in Svarga and many instances of adultery are told of him, notably, that, in which he corrupted Ahalyā, the wife of Gautama, by which he became known as 'Ahalyā's lover'.

Then it came about that, as Indra had superseded Varuṇa, he too was superseded. He had at first seemed to the Aryan warrior in a dry land the very embodiment of their own valour, possessed of their own love for

soma, and granting them the rain that they needed. When men of different character grew up in a later civilization the presentation of the supreme in Indra no longer satisfied them, and Indra became only a figure in the crowded verses of the Mahābhārata or in the stories in the Puranas.

Rudra

The name Rudra means 'the howler' or 'the roarer' and in the Rig-veda it also often seems to mean 'ruddy' or 'red'. Rudra is the god of storms and father of the 'Rudras' or Maruts. He is celebrated in only three or four hymns in the Rig-veda and his name is not mentioned quite so often as that of Vishṇu. He is generally armed with bow and arrows and sometimes with a thunderbolt and his terrible arrows bring death or disease on men and cattle. He is called 'terrible as a wild beast' and 'the ruddy boar of heaven'.

But he is not an entirely malevolent demon. He can preserve from calamity and give prosperity to man and beast. He is termed 'possessor of healing remedies' and 'greatest of physicians'.

But the main interest in the study of the character of Rudra as drawn in the Rig-veda is that Rudra receives the epithet *śiva*, and is the link between the gods of the Aryans and the demon worship of the races that were in India before the Aryans reached it. The origin of this word *śiva* is difficult to trace if it is sought among purely Sanskrit roots. But it is derived quite naturally from the Dravidian root *se, sev, siva* meaning 'red', 'ruddy' and so 'beautiful' and 'right'. Whatever its derivation the word *śiva* is not used in the Vedas as the name of any

god, but it is used as an adjective meaning 'propitious', 'auspicious', 'favourable,' and in this sense it is applied to Rudra, to placate him, for he was the most terrible god that the Aryans knew. In the later Vedas this epithet is almost exclusively reserved for him though it is still used occasionally of other gods. It is interesting to notice, especially if Rudra means 'red', that in Tamil verse, a thousand years old, the epithet *seyyan*, 'the red one' (*aral pol seyyā*, 'red one like fire') is similarly regularly applied to the god of destruction. (*Tiruvāsagam* 7.42; 29.27). As the Vedic period advanced Rudra began to be thought of not only as a god of storms in general, but as an universal destroyer. Then the epithet *Śiva* became a proper name and men spoke of Śiva instead of Rudra as the god who caused destruction. As the Aryans and the Dravidians came into closer relation, the Aryans found that these people, whom they called Dasyus, worshipped destructive demons somewhat like Rudia with blood offerings, as they do at certain great festivals all through South India to this day. And it may be guessed that as the Dravidians learned a little of the religion of their conquerors they also found that Rudra, who was beginning to be called Śiva, resembled their own deities in some ways. And so it might come about that Rudra, now called Śiva, the 'Mahadeva' or 'great god' of the Aryans, and Śiva, 'the red god' of the Dasyus were identified by both Aryans and Dasyus and henceforth were one deity. If *Śiva* was originally a Dravidian word this would happen all the more naturally. As larger and larger numbers of non-Aryans were included in the fourfold simple caste-system of earlier Hinduism the name of Rudra,

the Aryan storm-god, passed away, and Śiva, the god of destruction, in contrast with Vishṇu, the preserver, and Brahmā the creator, took his place and became one of the supremely important triad of gods (*trimūrti*) of later Hinduism. This may not have happened everywhere, and it is only possible to guess at the process, but it must have been in some such way that non-Aryan malevolent demon deities became identified with Śiva, most terrible of gods, and Durgā, most awful of goddesses, in later Hinduism.[1]

An interesting example of this oneness of the Śiva of later Hinduism with the more ancient demon deities of the Dravidians is found in the name given to demon temples in the Tamil Districts of South India. In idiomatic Tamil a demon shrine is called *pey-kovil* 'demon palace.' Such a shrine is often dedicated to demon deities with such entirely Dravidian names as *Veppa marattu kaṟuppan*, 'the black god dwelling in the *neem*-tree' or *Māvadiyāḷ* 'she who dwells in the mango-tree'. In Tamil that has been affected by Sanskrit the term used is *Īśvaran kovil*, which means 'the palace of Īśvaran.' *Īśvaran* is a Tamil form of the Sanskrit word meaning 'Lord' and is applied in Tamil particularly to Śiva. So that in common speech *Īśvaran* 'the lord Śiva'—an Aryan term—and the Dravidian word *pey* 'the demon' are treated as synonymous. And so it may be that the little demon deities of South India are linked through Sivan 'the Red One' with Rudra and the gods of the early Aryans.

[1] See Mr. R. W. FRAZER'S article on the Dravidians of South India in the *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, vol. v. p. 22.

Parjanya

Parjanya is a god who sheds rain, invoked in only three hymns and only mentioned about thirty times in the Rig-veda. In several passages the name simply means a 'rain cloud'. He is called the lord of all moving creatures, the soul of all things, the son of Dyaus, the father of the soma-plant.

Parjanya is really one of the older deities whom the Aryans venerated before they entered India and Persia. In curious proof of this we find that this god was worshipped as a god of thunder under the name Perkunas in Lithuania, on the shores of the Baltic, far away from India, by quite another branch of the Aryans. Like Dyaus Parjanya was fading out of the memory of the Indian Aryans when the hymns of the Vedas were composed. Hence Parjanya does not stand out clearly and in later times he gave place to Indra to whom his name was applied.

The Bhrigus

The Bhṛigus were probably an ancient tribe of priests. They are said to have cherished the sacred fire and to have made chariots. Though mentioned as divine beings along with Agni, and classed with the gods of the air, they are of inferior importance, little higher than the Ṛibhus with whom they are sometimes associated.

Maruts

The name *Marut* was thought by Max Müller to mean 'the smasher' and to be applied to the gods of the cyclone or tornado. Benfey considered that they were

the personifications of the souls of the dead and that their name was connected with *mar*, *mṛi*, to die. The name may also be connected with an old Sanskrit root meaning to shine.

The Maruts are thrice-sixty or only twenty-seven in number, and are the sons of Indra and speckled cow Priśni which represents the clouds. They are also said to be sons of Rudra, and sons of Heaven. They are frequently associated with Indra in his expeditions as his allies and friends.

> Spears rest upon your shoulders, ye Maruts; ye have anklets on your feet, golden ornaments on your breasts, lustre in your cars, fiery lightnings in your hands, and golden helmets placed upon your heads.
>
> *Rig-veda*, v. 54. 11.

They cause the earth and the mountains to quake. They rend trees and devour forests like wild elephants. They have iron teeth. They ride with whips in their hands. They aid Indra in his conquest of Vṛittra. They are the favourite deities of some of the Rishis and are often praised in the hymns.

III. THE GODS OF THE EARTH

Agni

Agni is the god of fire, the Ignis of the Latins, and the Ogni of the Slavonians. Next to Indra he is the most important god in the Rig-veda, being celebrated in more than two hundred hymns. The first hymn in the Rig-veda is addressed to him, and the other Books, all but two, begin with hymns to him.

Agni is the sacrificial fire of the Aryans, and all the ritual of the sacrifice centred round the sacred fire.

Hence the constant reference to Agni in the hymns, which were chanted while the sacrifice was being prepared or performed.

Fire, it must be remembered, is always wonderful to primitive peoples. Its production by the friction caused by rubbing two dry sticks together or by the striking of two flints is almost as strange as the flash of the lightning. The benefits of light and warmth that fire gives and its service in preparing food are regarded as direct gifts from the gods. Thinkers, who are the singers or poets of early peoples, come to see a connexion between the light and heat of the fire and the light and heat of the sun, and then trace the ripening of grain and fruit to the same beneficent power. It is only a step from this to the conviction that all light and all heat are the manifestation of the power of one great God.

Various accounts are given in the Vedas of the origin of Agni. He is said to have been brought from afar, to have been generated by Indra between two clouds or stones, or by Indra and Vishṇu, or by the gods, or to be the son of Dyaus and Pṛithivī. Yet he is the father of the gods. He is called *dvijanman*, 'having two births,' either as born of Dyaus and Pṛithivī, or of two sacrificial sticks. His springing from the sacrificial sticks is elsewhere frequently mentioned. Wonderful is his growth. His mother cannot suckle him, but clarified butter is his food. The ten maidens sometimes said to produce him are the ten fingers that twirl the upright piece of wood on the lower piece to duce a spark by friction. As he is born on earth among men, in the air, and in the heavens, he has a triple birth. He is also said to have been born from the

waters. As there is a fire in every house, Agni is said to have many births and to dwell in every home.

Agni is an immortal who takes up his abode graciously among men. He is the household priest (*purohita*, *ṛitvij*, *hotṛi* or *brahman*) who wakes the Dawn. He is the most adorable of sacrificers, divinest among sages, wise director and accomplisher of all sacrifices, knows all the times of the ceremonies and can put right the mistakes of men, is 'father of sacrifices', a swift messenger between heaven and earth, conveying the hymns and offerings of the worshippers, calling the gods to the sacrifices, and he is sometimes described as the mouth or tongue through which gods and men participate in the sacrifice. He is the king of men, the lord of the household (*gṛihapati*) and the guest of every house, friendly to all, father, mother, brother, son, kinsman and friend. He drives away demons, rakshasas, watching over men with his thousand eyes, and consuming the enemies of those who are the enemies of his worshippers. All blessings come from him, even rain, but his chief gifts are household prosperity and children.

He is called goblin-slayer, butter-fed, destroyer of darkness, bright-flaming, tawny-haired. He has burning teeth, is all devouring, roars like a lion, is borne on a chariot of lightning, or on a golden car.

As he is endowed with all these characteristics his worshippers ascribe to him the production of the two worlds, say that he caused the sun to ascend the sky, praise him as creator of all living and moving creatures, declare that all obey his commands, that the gods worship him, that those who venerate him will prosper,

that he will give renowned sons, that he protects in battle, confers immortality, carries men across calamity, and can give forgiveness from whatever sin the worshipper may have committed through folly.

He is occasionally identified with other gods and even goddesses, Indra, Vishṇu, Varuṇa, Pūshan, Sarasvatī and others.

Agni was worshipped by the Aryans in the fire kindled each morning while the family gathered round it in awe. As the clarified butter (*ghi*) was poured on, and the flame rose it was a sign that Agni was present and received the offering. At nightfall when the family gathered round the fire for warmth or light Agni seemed present in the flames, a kindly god, ready to guard and bless his worshipper through the long hours of darkness when the other gods had disappeared and all sorts of evil demons and goblins were abroad. Agni was near men and stayed with them. Thus he typified to the earliest thinkers in India the loving-kindness of God.

Soma

In two points the Hindus of to-day differ greatly from their Aryan ancestors. The ancient Aryans occasionally ate meat, even beef, and they delighted in drinking the intoxicating juice of the soma plant. Nearly a whole book of the Rig-veda, containing 114 hymns, is devoted to the praise of this soma, either as the juice of the plant or that juice deified, and constant references are made to soma in other hymns.

Professor Whitney explains that the Aryans thought intoxication to be a sort of divine inspiration; and so worshipped and deified its cause.

> The simple-minded Aryan people, whose whole religion was a worship of the wonderful powers and phenomena of nature, had no sooner perceived that this liquid had the power to elevate the spirits, and produce a temporary frenzy, under the influence of which the individual was prompted to, and capable of, deeds beyond his natural powers, than they found in it something divine; it was to their apprehension a god, endowing those into whom it entered with godlike powers; the plant which afforded it became to them the king of plants; the process of preparing it was a holy sacrifice; the instruments used therefore were sacred. [1]

Nor were the Aryans who came to India the first to worship Soma. The Aryans who found their way into Persia also adored it as *Haoma*, and said many of the same things about it that the Indian Aryans said, so that it is clear that Soma was a divinity reverenced by the Aryans before they were divided into these two races, and belongs to a very early time in the history of the primitive Aryans.

The soma plant from which the inspiring juice is pressed grew on mountains and has been supposed to be one of the 'milk-weeds', or asclepiads, perhaps that called *sarcostemma viminale* or the *asclepias acida*, which all contain a milk-like juice. But the references in the Vedas do not enable us to identify it with any certainty. No modern plant has the attributes of the deified plant of the Vedas.

[1] JAOS, iii, 299.

So long as Vedic worship lasted the ancient belief in the divine power of the soma-juice continued. The hymns addressed to Soma the god were intended to be sung to him to gain his favour while the soma plant was being crushed in the press and the juice extracted. Then the worshippers drank and rejoiced, praising the plant, its juice and the god without distinction, as may be seen in the following verses and in the readings from the Vedas.

We have drunk the soma, we have become immortal, we have entered into light, we have known the gods. What can an enemy now do to us, or what can the malice of any mortal effect, O thou immortal god?

Rig-veda, viii. 48. 3.

All the gods delight in the soma-juice.

Indra hath drunk, Agni hath drunk; all deities have drunk their fill.

Rig-veda, vii. 58. 11.

O Soma, gladden Varuṇa and Mitra; cheer Indra Pavamāna! Indra Vishṇu.

Cheer thou the gods, the company of Maruts: Indu, cheer mighty Indra to rejoicing.

Rig-veda, ix. 90. 5.

Make Vāyu glad, for furtherance and bounty; cheer Varuṇa and Mitra as they cleanse thee.

Gladden the gods, gladden the host of Maruts; make Heaven and Earth rejoice, O God, O Soma.

Rig-veda, ix. 97. 42.

But Indra is the deity especially addicted to love of the soma.

Even as a thirsty steer who roams the deserts, may he drink eagerly the milked-out soma.

Rig-veda, v. 36. 1.

Then Indra at a single draught drank the contents of thirty pails, pails that were filled with soma-juice.

Rig-veda, viii. 66. 4.

His belly, drinking deepest draughts of soma, like an ocean swells.

Rig-veda, i. 8. 7.

The soma plant is said to have been brought to the earth from the sky by a falcon, or to have been found on a mountain. It is sometimes said to have been conducted to the Gandharvas by the daughter of Sūrya, or to be the offspring of Parjanya, the rain-god.

In the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa the Gāyatrī is said to have become a bird and to have brought Soma from the sky. In the Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa Prajāpati is said to have created the divine soma and the three Vedas after him.

Soma as a god is said to have had the thirty-three daughters of Prajāpati as his wives.

Soma is said to clothe the naked, heal the sick, to bestow sight on the blind, to give heaven to his worshippers, and to exhilirate even such gods as Varuṇa, Mitra and Indra. He has a car and weapons, and destroys foes. Soma inspires Indra to conquest:

Impetuous as a bull, he chose the soma, and quaffed in three-fold sacrifice the juices.

Indra with his own great and deadly thunder smote into pieces Vṛitra, worst of Vṛitras.

Rig-veda, i. 32. 3 and 5.

Soma is the generator of the hymns, creator of the gods, king of gods and men, elevated over all worlds, thousand-eyed. Soma is 'priest of the gods, the leader of singers, a rishi among sages, a bull among wild animals, a falcon among kites, an axe in the woods'.

Rig-veda, ix. 96. 6.

The hymns to Soma describe the purification and preparation of the juice with much fanciful imagery. The god is said to fly like a bird to settle in the vats. The sound of the flowing juice is like that of a roaring bull.

In later times Soma is identified with the moon. In the Atharva-veda Soma means the moon.

In Aryan worship libations of soma-juice were poured out by the worshipper as drink for the gods. In later times when worship had become elaborate, the hymns originally sung during the extraction of the soma-juice from the plant were collected from the Rig-veda and made the basis of the Sāma-veda and were chanted by the Udgātṛi priests, while the Soma sacrifice was being prepared.

Yama and Yami

Yama and Yamī (meaning 'the twins') were the son and daughter of Vivasvat, the sun, and Saraṇyū, the dawn. They are said to have been the first human beings. In the tenth hymn of the tenth book of the Rig-veda, Yama is described as refusing to treat Yamī as his wife. In the Atharva-veda Yama is the first of men who died, and he found the way to the celestial world. He gives abodes in that heaven to the pious.

He is said to have two fierce dogs which guard the way to his abode and wander about among men as his messengers, and he sends a bird as the herald of doom. In the Atharva-veda Mṛityu or Death is said to be his messenger. But nowhere in the Rig-veda is Yama regarded as having anything to do with the punishment of the wicked. That is an idea that became current in

later Hinduism, in which he is the judge and punisher of the dead like the Greek Pluto and Minos.

Prithivi

The earth-goddess, or the earth personified under the name Pṛithivī—'the broad one'—has only one short hymn addressed to herself. She is generally associated with Dyaus, and invoked along with him. She is the mother of all beings.

IV. THE ABSTRACT GODS

Aditi and the Adityas

Aditi means that which is unbound, free, and so 'freedom' is the name of a goddess, often mentioned, though there is no hymn expressly in her honour. She seems to be a personification of light as the cause of the universe.

> Aditi is the heavens; Aditi is mid-air; Aditi is the mother and the sire and the son. Aditi is all gods; Aditi is men in the five classes; Aditi is all that hath been born and shall be born.
>
> *Rig-veda*, i. 89. 10.

Aditi is asked for blessings of children and cattle and for protection, but her two most notable characteristics are that: (i) she is the mother of the Ādityas and (ii) that like Varuṇa the chief of her sons, she can heal suffering and forgive sin.

The Ādityas, the sons of Aditi, are more frequently mentioned than their mother. In *Rig-veda*, ii. 27. 1 six are mentioned: Mitra, Aryaman, Bhaga, Varuṇa, Daksha, and Aṁśa. In x. 72. 8. 9, it is said that Aditi

had eight sons, of whom she presented only seven to the gods, casting out Mārttāṇḍa, the eighth, though she is said to have afterwards brought him forward. Varuṇa was considered the chief.

In after times the Ādityas were increased to twelve, representing the sun in the twelve months of the year.

Varuṇa and Mitra assumed special characters, but in the beginning the Ādityas were the gods of the eternal celestial light, not specially the sun or the moon or the stars, but generally the eternal sustainers of the luminous life, which exists behind all these.[1]

Prajapati

The name Prajāpati means the 'lord of creatures'. In the Vedas it is originally an epithet applied to Savitṛi, Soma, Indra, Tvaṣṭri, Agni, Hiraṇya-garbha. Later it was the personal name of the god who bestows progeny and cattle. Sometimes Prajāpati is invoked as one god among the other 'thirty-three' but afterwards as a creator. In the impressive one hundred and twenty-first hymn of the tenth book of the Rig-veda in answer to the refrain, 'What god shall we with sacrifice worship?' the answer is finally given.

> Prajāpati! thou only comprehendest all these created things, and none beside thee.
>
> Grant us our hearts' desire when we invoke thee: may we have store of riches in possession.

In the Atharva-veda and White Yajur-veda (*Vājasaneyi-samhitā*) and regularly in the Brāhmaṇas Prajāpati is spoken of as the supreme father of the gods, and

[1] MUIR, *Sanskrit Texts*, vol. v, p. 56.

Puruṣa is identified with him. In the Sūtras he is identified with Brahmā;

In the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa Prajāpati is said to have been himself half mortal and half immortal.

> Prajāpati created living creatures. From his higher vital breath he created the gods; from his lower vital breath he created men. Afterwards he created Death the devourer for all living creatures. Of that Prajapati one-half was mortal, the other immortal, and with that half which was mortal he was afraid of Death.
>
> *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*, x. 1. 4. 1.

> Misery, death, smote Prajāpati when he was creating living beings. He performed austerity for a thousand years to get free from misery.
>
> *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*, x. 4. 4. 1.

In reading the texts about Prajāpati it is clear that while he is sometimes treated as a god of secondary importance, later on he represents the attempt to express the abstract idea of the supreme first cause of all things.

Sraddha Sarasvati and other Goddesses

It was powerful, war-like, generous gods that appealed most to the imagination of Vedic singers and little is said about the goddesses. Nearly all the great gods have wives, Agni's wife is Agnāyī, Indra's wife is Indrāṇī, Varuṇa's wife is Varuṇānī, and so on. But goddesses as wives of the great gods are scarcely noticed in the Vedas, and such goddesses as are specially mentioned—Pṛithivī, Aditi, Ushas, Vāch—are worshipped for the special characteristics that have been mentioned in the accounts already given of them.

In the Rig-veda Sarasvatī is a river, and a river-goddess, invoked to be present a sacrifice offered on her banks, and her influence helped the sages to compose hymns. She is called the best of mothers, of rivers and of goddesses (*Rig-veda*, ii. 41. 16). In the Rig-veda Sarasvatī and Vāch are distinct, and it was in later times that the two were identified, and that Sarasvatī became under different names the wife of Brahmā and the goddess of wisdom.

Apas, the waters, Araṇyānī, the goddess of forest solitude and Śraddhā, religious faith are mentioned with several other goddesses, but not in any noteworthy fashion. The word Lakshmī occurs in the Rig-veda once as meaning 'auspicious' but not as the name of the goddess of good fortune. In the *Atharva-veda*, vii. 115. 1, many Lakshmīs, some good and some bad, are spoken of. It was left to later and debased Hinduism to accept the worship of such deities as Durgā and Kālī, and to sanction the excesses of Śakti-worship.

Vach

Vāch, meaning speech, is a goddess personifying speech as the means by which man may obtain knowledge. She is represented as created by Prajāpati and, in a legend, that is repulsive, as his mate. Vāch was sold by the gods to the Gandharvas in exchange for soma. She is the 'mother of the Vedas' and is also the wife of Indra.

In later literature Vāch is identified with Sarasvatī and was wife of Brahmā under various names. As Sarasvatī she was the goddess of wisdom and eloquence.

Two hymns in the tenth book of the Rig-veda are addressed to her.

Brihaspati and Brahmanaspati

In the Rig-veda Bṛihaspati and Brahmaṇaspati are equivalent and mean 'lord of prayer'. Bṛihaspati is a deity, in whom the action of the worshipper upon the gods is personified. He is the suppliant, the sacrificer, the priest who intercedes with the gods on behalf of men, and protects them from the wicked. He represents the priests and the priestly order. He is also designated as the purohita of the gods. He is the lord and protector of prayer. He is described as destroying the demon Vala and driving forth the cows, i.e. causing the clouds to yield their rain.

He is also described as the father of the gods; and creator of the gods like a black-smith; to have a hundred wings; to be armed with an iron axe. In some passages he is identified with Agni, but this opposed by others.

In later times he is a rishi and regent of the planet Jupiter.

Ka

The one hundred and twenty-first hymn of the tenth book of the Rig-veda has as the refrain of each of the first nine verses:

What god shall we adore with our oblation?

The word 'ka' is the Sanskrit interrogative pronoun 'what?' In later times this interrogative was treated as a proper name, the question became an assertion, and the refrain of the hymn reads:

Ka is the god whom we shall adore with our oblation.

In later Vedic literature Ka is a synonym for Prajāpati, Brahmā, Vishṇu and other gods. In the Purāṇas, Ka appears as a recognized god, as a supreme god, with a genealogy of his own, perhaps even with a wife. The Mahābhārata identifies Ka with Dakṣha, and the Bhāgavata Purāna applies the term to Kaśyapa.

Kama

In later Hinduism Kāma is the god of sexual desire, but in the Atharva-veda Kāma is the desire for good in general, and is exalted as the creator of all. In the Rig-veda desire is said to have been the first impulse that arose in the One in the beginning: 'Kāma, the primal seed and germ of the spirit' (*Rig-veda*, x. 129. 4). According to some Kāma was son of Dharma, the god of justice and Śraddhā, the goddess of faith. It is in the Purāṇas that the stories of the temptation of Śiva by Kāma is told, and that he is described as armed with a bow of sugar-cane, with a line of bees as his bow-string and flower-tipped arrows.

Visve Devas

Sixty hymns are addressed to the Viśve Devas. This is a term meaning 'All-gods' and was invented to include all the devas so that none should be omitted when an invocation was uttered at a sacrifice which was meant for all. Later this term became the name of a group of ten deities, sons of Viśvā, daughter of Daksha, particularly worshipped at Shrāddha ceremonies.

V. INFERIOR DEITIES

Tvastri

Tvaṣṭṛi is the Vulcan of the Romans. He is the most skilful of workmen, who is versed in all wonderful contrivances. He sharpens and carries the great iron axe of Brahmaṇaspati and forges the thunderbolts of Indra. He forms husband and wife for each other. He has given to the heaven and earth and to all things their form. He is master of the universe, the first-born protector and leader. He bestows long life, puts speed into the legs of a horse, gives blessings, and is possessed of abundant wealth.

In later times Tvaṣṭṛi is regarded as one of the Ādityas. He is said to have had twin children. One was a daughter, Saraṇyū, who married Vivasvat and became mother of the Aśvins. The other was a son, Viśvarūpa, who had three heads, six eyes, and three mouths, and was slain by Indra.

He is connected with the Ṛibhus who fashioned Indra's chariot and there was enmity between him and them because they made a single sacrificial cup of his manufacture into four cups.

The Ṛibhus

The name Ṛibhu means skilful and the Ṛibhus are said to be three sons of Sudhanvan, a descendant of Angiras, called Ṛibhu, Vibhvan and Vāja. They are celebrated in the Rig-veda as skilful workmen, who fashioned Indra's chariot and horses, the car of the Aśvins and the cow of Bṛihaspati, and made their parents

young again. By command of the gods, and with a promise of exaltation to divine honours, they made a single sacrificial cup fashioned by Tvaṣṭṛi into four. They are also spoken of as supporters of the sky. Eleven hymns are addressed to them.

Visvakarman

The name Viśvakarman simply means 'all creator', 'all doer' and was originally an epithet of any powerful god; but in course of time it came to designate a special god, Viśvakarman, the great architect of the universe. As such, two hymns are addressed to him.

In later books he is identified with Tvaṣṭṛi. In the Rāmāyana he is represented as having built the city of Lanka for the rākshasas.

He presides over manual labour as well as over the sixty-four manual arts. He is represented in one hymn as the All-Father, the one all-seeing God, with eyes, faces, arms and feet on every side, who blows forth heaven and earth with his arms and wings.

Gandharvas and Apsarases

Apsaras was a celestial water nymph and the Apsarases are heavenly nymphs loved by a class of male genius called Gandharvas. Some of the Apsarases mated with mortal men. Thus Urvaśi was loved by Purūravas, and there is a hymn from him to her in the Rig-veda (x. 95). In the later literature the Apsarases are celestial courtesans and the Gandharvas are attendants on the greater gods.

Divine Priests

Manu the first sacrificer and the ancestor of the human race is among the priests and heroes mentioned in the Rig-veda. There are also groups of ancient priests called Angirases and Bhṛigus, and the seldom mentioned Seven Ṛishis, afterwards regarded as the seven stars in the constellation of the Great Bear.

VI. DEMONS AND DEIFIED ANIMALS AND OBJECTS

Demons

There are many kinds of demons, and many individual demons specially named in the hymns.

Roughly speaking all may be divided into two classes.

There are the asuras, or 'living spirits', the opponents of the devas in their efforts to help their worshippers. Naturally the early invaders considered that the gods of their enemies the Dasyus were asuras. Indeed, the words *dāsa* and *dasyu* are often used in the sense of demon. The demon Vṛitra, who held off rain and caused drought, is the most notable of these asuras.

The rākshasas are the second class. They are goblins that infest the earth and are as hostile to men as the asuras are to the gods. They have all sorts of horrible shapes, are deformed and of dreadful colours. The piśāchas of the later Vedas—the *pey* of the southern Tamil Dravidians—are among the most dreaded of rākshasas in the later literature, but they are scarcely mentioned in the Rig-veda, which may be an indication that as yet the invaders had not acquired the knowledge

of the demons of the original inhabitants which they gained later and which has such important though indefinite influence in modern Hinduism.

The Serpent

Though the demon of drought, Vṛitra had a serpent form there is no trace of serpent-worship in the Rig-veda, and it is in the later literature that the semi-divine Nāgas and other serpent-folk are found. The whole subject of serpent-worship is obscure. It is more than likely that the tribes in the land before the Aryans came there were serpent-worshippers. Such worship is common in South India. The cobra in particular—called 'the good snake', *nalla pāmpu*, in Tamil—is a regular object of worship. And stones on which serpents are carved, called *nāga-linga* are exceedingly common.

The Horse

The gods possess heavenly horses, sometimes winged, to draw their cars. Two hymns (*Rig-veda*, i. 162 and 163) show that the horse was a sacrificial victim in the earliest times.

The Cow

Though the Aryans ate beef, and termed a guest *goghna*, 'one for whom a cow is slain', there is evidence that they already treated the cow as a sacred animal. It is called *Aghnyā*, 'not to be killed', and from the ancient Persian literature it would seem that, before the Aryans separated into different races, the many benefits that are bestowed by the cow had led it to be looked on as a most auspicious creature. But it is in the Brāhmaṇas

and the Atharva-veda that the worship of the cow is fully recognized.

Sacrificial and other implements

Sacrificial implements, the sacrificial post to which the victim was tied, the plough and weapons of war are occasionally deified. This is practically the same as the modern *āyutha pūja*, the worship of weapon or tool once a year—a ceremony common to all ranks of Hindus—a very ancient practice indeed as the *Mahābhārata* shows.

VII. THE PITRIS: ANCESTOR SERVICE AND WORSHIP

Apart from the worship of the devas the respect for the spirits of the departed ancestors was another form of piety ever present in the minds of the early Aryans, as it is in that of all primitive peoples in one form or another. It is often referred to in the Rig-veda, and in the śrāddha ceremonies of modern Hinduism has become a very important part of the popular religion, which it is obligatory on even the most latitudinarian Hindu to observe annually at all costs.

It has two distinct stages.

There is first that stage in which early peoples believe that the soul of the departed, like the man alive, depends on food and drink for its continued existence. Those who hold this belief in this simple form of course consider the soul to be a material substance, or at most have but a dim idea of a non-material spiritual existence. And just as they felt it their duty to provide their father or mother with food while still alive, so they thought it their duty to continue to provide them with sustenance

after they were dead. Food was therefore laid out in the open, and the souls of the dead were called to take it. The Dravidians, even the lowest of them, practised this piety as well as the Aryans, and to this day the Tamil Paraiyan believes with all his heart that if for any reason, such as death away from his relatives or quarrels about the property among the dead man's heirs, the departed spirit is not cared for, it must become a malignant demon.

Here another idea is found which goes back to the very earliest times among the Aryans. They thought that the dead ancestor had to make a journey into some realms beyond this existence, either in the east whence the bright gods seemed to come or in the west, where lay the kingdom of Yama. And so in the days immediately after a man had died offerings were made to provide him with strength, and, in later thought, to provide the spiritual essence of his soul with a bodily form, so that he might accomplish the journey to the realms of the fathers.

Up to this point piety to the dead is an act of service rather than worship.

Ancestor-worship proper begins when the natural awe of the dead, or the traditions of the prowess or wisdom of some ancestor leads to the conviction that the dead man possesses power still to influence the affairs of his descendants. The memory of their great deeds or of their judicious sayings was invoked to inspire courage or to settle disputes. It was a simple transition to the belief that the man who imitated their valour in battle was helped by them, or that the man who obeyed their precepts was blessed by them, while the man who

disregarded them was accursed. And so the presentation of offerings ceased to be merely dutiful service and became religious worship; the spirits of the ancestors thus became gods in the families of their descendants; and the offerings made to them were intended to secure their care for the family or tribe to which the dead had belonged.

The ancient Aryan race, before it had left its original home and separated into different lands, had reached this stage of belief about ancestors and so alongside the worship of the gods there was the worship of the ancestors, or 'the Fathers,' the *Pitṛis*. Many passages might be quoted in proof of this:

> May the rising Dawns protect me, may the flowing Rivers protect me, may the firm Mountains protect me, may the Fathers protect me at this invocation of the gods.
>
> *Rig-veda*, vi. 52. 4.

> Let not the gods injure us here, nor our early fathers, who know the realms.
>
> *Rig-veda*, iii. 55. 2.

There is another distinction that is worth attention. The ancestors of the great Aryan families, though historically next to nothing was known about them, were exalted in tradition till they become almost as great as the gods, while the fathers but lately departed are scarcely more than remembered. In accordance with this distinction the term *Pitṛi* sometimes means ancestor of a tribe or race or even of mankind, as mankind seemed to the Aryan singer, but when used of an ordinary man's fathers, the term includes only his father, grandfathers and great-grandfathers.

The offerings were *piṇḍas*, balls of meal or rice or of meat and rice mixed with milk, curds, and flowers. The daily *Pitṛiyajna*, or ancestor worship, is one of the five sacrifices, sometimes called the great sacrifices, which every married man ought to perform day by day.

In this worship the father was the high-priest of the family, and controlled the worship of the ancestors of the family. He alone knew the special ritual which was traditional in his family, and which had to be maintained unchanged, if the favour of the dead was to be retained. He taught the rites to his son and, as high-priest of the ancestral rites of the family, he was its acknowledged head.

In the Vedas the *Pitṛis* are very often invoked along with Agni or other devas, and sometimes the adjective *deva* is applied to the *Pitṛis*, the *Pitṛis* never become devas. They are thought of as living in a state of blessedness in the world where Yama reigns. They dwell in festivity with Yama. Agni is supposed to convey the souls of the righteous dead to their abode, but according to the Atharva-veda (xviii-2.27) Death performs the office as the messenger of Yama. Agni, of course, here represents the fire of the funeral pyre. Led by Agni the spirit of the dead leaves behind on earth all that is evil and proceeding by the paths on which his ancestors have gone, he soars to the realms of eternal light in a car or on wings, wafted by the Maruts. There he regains his ancient body in a complete form.

> Each parted member, severed from thy body, thy vital breaths that in the wind have vanished,
>
> With all of these, piece after piece, shall Fathers who dwell together meet and reunite thee.
>
> *Atharva-veda*, xviii 2. 26.

In that realm, by the favour of Yama, he enters on a new life of happiness in the presence of the gods and full of delights.

This was the thought of Yama when he answered: This man is mine. Let him come here to riches.

Atharva-veda, xviii 2. 37.

Yama himself is sometimes addressed as if he were one of the Fathers, the first of mortals that died or that trod the path of the Fathers leading to the common sunset in the West. But his real nature is never completely forgotten and, as the god of the setting sun, though he is the leader of the Fathers, he is not one of the Fathers himself.

The following verses from one of the hymns of the Rig-veda shows how ancestors were invited to come to the sacrifice:

1. May the soma-loving Fathers, the lowest, the highest, and the middle, arise. May the gentle and righteous Fathers who have come to life (again) protect us in these invocations!

4. Come hither to us with your help, you Fathers who sit on the grass! We have prepared these oblations for you, accept them! Come hither with your most blessed protection, and give us health and wealth without fail!

5. The soma-loving Fathers have been called hither to their dear viands which are placed on the grass. Let them approach, let them listen, let them bless, let them protect us!

Rig-veda, x. 15.

The full development of the worship of the ancestors and the appointment of the three kinds of *śrāddha* for ancestors in general (*nitya*); for the spiritual embodi-

ment of a recently deceased father (*naimittika*); or as a work of merit (*kāmya*) belong to later Hinduism. There are full descriptions of this worship in the Brāhmaṇas and Sūtras. The Epics, the Law-books and the Puranas constantly refer to it. It is at the root of the worship of many a modern deity who is in reality some hero or sage deified.[1]

Hindu customs of inheritance and marriage are closely related to ancestor worship. Speaking generally, he who has the right to perform the funeral ceremonies and the annual *śrāddha* for the dead has part in the dead man's possessions.

[1] The deification of a hero or heroine is similar to the deification of ancestors. Thus the god of a tribe of basket-weavers in Dharapuram in the Madras Presidency is the general of a raja perhaps of 'Appaji Nayak's time' and their goddess is Vīramātti his wife, who threw herself into a pit of fire that she might attain heaven with her husband's spirit when she heard that he was slain.

V. THE SACRIFICES OF THE ARYANS

THE careful study of the religious literature of the Assyrian, Babylonian, Hebrew or other religions of the Semitic races, or of the ideas of the early Greeks or of the beliefs and practices of the early Aryans, shows that all these people offered sacrifices of many kinds. The offerings—grain or oil or soma-juice or the flesh of animals or even the life of man—were not the same in all lands and on all occasions and the rites according to which the offering was given to the god differed in different countries, and were different in the same country at various times. But all sacrifice was performed because of one or other of two main ideas or because of a combination of the two ideas in the mind of the sacrificer.

Motives for sacrifice

The early worshipper wished to have a strong bond of union between himself and his god, and to secure that it seemed to him best that he and his god should feast together and especially that they should feast together on some animal sacred to the god and often considered to be of kin with the sacrificer.

Or the worshipper was moved to offer sacrifices because he felt that his god required from him some gift, great or small, either to expiate divine wrath or to win divine favour.

The Vedic hymns show that although the Aryans drank soma-juice with their gods, and though priest and

sacrificer shared the flesh of the victim, in the times when the hymns were collected a sacrificial offering was essentially a bribe to secure the favour of a given god; and the Aryans came later to believe that, if the proper victim were offered according to the appointed ceremonial, the gods could not refuse the petitions of the sacrificer.

The sacrifices of Vedic times may be divided into two classes. There are the household sacrifices and the greater sacrifices.

The household sacrifices were part of the earliest worship of the Aryans. The father of the family celebrated them and his wife assisted at them. They were simple and homely attempts to propitiate the heavenly powers. The sacred fire was kindled by the friction of two sticks in the central part of a new house when it was first inhabited and the fire was never allowed to go out. Each morning and evening the householder and his family assembled round the sacred flame. The master of the house as *agnihotṛi* priest of the fire, fed the fire with offerings of wood and clarified butter (*ghṛta*, the modern *ghī* or ghee). While Agni the god, present in the fire, carried these simple offerings to the gods in the skies hymns were chanted and prayers ascended with the smoke.

Aryan sacrifices

At the times of the new and of the full moons special worship was offered, and the householder decorated his house and tied bunches of grass over the doorway, perhaps much in the same way as bunches of leaves of the *neem* (or *margosa*) or *asoka* trees are tied over doorways or across streets in strings (*toraṇa*) in these days.

At the beginning of the spring, of the rainy season and of autumn there were special sacrifices. Twice a

year when the fruit or grain ripened the ripe first-fruits were offered in a rustic festival to the gods. Once a year, when the rainy season set in, a he-goat was sacrificed in the house of the sacrificer.

Soma-juice was part of every offering of any importance, especially in invocations of Indra. Apparently it was simply poured out on to the bundles of the sacred *kusa* grass which were provided as seats for the invisible gods.

The great sacrifices

The greater sacrifices were offered in special emergencies or by kings or sages to gain extraordinary ends. They became as will be seen later, costly and elaborate beyond belief.

The chief of the great sacrifices were:

the soma sacrifice;
the sacrifices of cows and oxen and other animals;
the horse sacrifice;
the human sacrifice.

The primitive family worship grew speedily more complex, and even before the hymns in the Rig-veda were collected the idea of sacrifice had so fully laid hold on the mind of the Aryans that all the thousand hymns in the Rig-veda refer directly or indirectly to sacrifice.

Rise of priesthood

The main reason for this was the belief mentioned above that if a hymn was rightly sung or chanted and if a sacrifice was duly performed, it was an infallible means of securing the object of the sacrificer, however audacious. It was thus of the utmost importance that the sacrifice if it were any but the most ordinary, should be performed by one who knew every detail of the ritual.

Hence the man with skill in the performance of sacrifice or in the wording of petitions came to be a person of importance. He was the spell-monger, the sooth-sayer (the *mantra-kāra*), the master of charms, the Brahman or 'prayer maker' of the Aryans, perhaps the same as the *flāmen* of the Latins. The social value of the priest, because he could pray or sacrifice more acceptably than others naturally led the priest himself to exaggerate and emphasize his own office and so a professional priesthood and a regular priestcraft came into existence.

With the rise of this priesthood the performance of the greater sacrifices became their special duty, and though a Kshatriya like King Janaka, the *rāj-ṛishi*, might insist on the right to offer his own sacrifice, the priesthood gradually acquired the monopoly of celebrating all such sacrifices, and added ceremony to ceremony till it became impossible to observe the ritual and the whole system collapsed.

A hymn in the Atharva-veda (iii. 19) sets forth the power of the priest to secure the prosperity of those who are his friends and the destruction of his enemies, and is an indication of the growing pretensions of the priests as a class.

1. May this prayer of mine be successful; may the vigour and strength of mine be complete, may the power be perfect, undecaying, and victorious of those of which I am the *purohita*.

2. I fortify their kingdom, and augment their energy, valour and force. I break the arms of their enemies with this oblation.

3. May all those who fight against our wise and prosperous (prince) sink downwards and be prostrated.

With my prayer I destroy his enemies and raise up his friends.

4. May those of whom I am the *purohita* be sharper than an axe, sharper than fire, sharper than Indra's thunderbolt.

5. I strengthen their weapons; I prosper their kingdom rich in heroes. May their power be undecaying and victorious. May all the gods foster their designs.

Atharva-veda, iii. 19.

Priests and their duties

Max Müller gives a long account of the principal orders of priests and their duties which may be summarized as follows:—

The Adhvaryus were the priests who were intrusted with the material performance of the sacrifice. They had to measure the ground, to build the altar, to prepare the sacrificial vessels, to fetch wood and water, to light the fire, to bring the victim and slay it. They formed, as it would seem, the lowest class of priests, and their acquirements were more of a practical than an intellectual character. Some of the duties of the Adhvaryus, were considered so degrading, that other persons besides the priests were frequently employed in them. The Śamitṛi, for instance, who had to slay the animal, was not a priest, he need not even be a Brahman, and the same remark applies to the Vaikartas, the butchers, and the so-called Chamasādhvaryus. The number of hymns and invocations which the Adhvaryus had to use at the sacrifices were smaller than that of the other priests. These, however, they had to learn by heart. But as the chief difficulty consisted in the exact recitation of hymns and in the close observance of all the euphonic rules, as

taught in the Prātiśākhyas, the Adhvaryus were allowed to mutter their hymns, so that no one at a distance could either hear or understand them. Only in cases where the Adhvaryu had to speak to other officiating priests, commanding them to perform certain duties, he was, of course, obliged to speak with a loud and distinct voice. All their verses and all the invocations which the Adhvaryus had to use, were collected in the ancient liturgy of the Adhvaryus together with the rules of the sacrifice. In this mixed form they exist in the Taittirīya Samhitā or Black Yajur-veda. Afterwards the hymns were collected by themselves, separated from the ceremonial rules, and this collection is what we called the white *Yajur-veda-samhitā*, or the Prayer Book of the Adhvaryus priests.

Some parts of the sacrifice, according to ancient custom, had to be accompanied by songs, hence another class of priests arose whose particular office it was to act as the chorus. They took part in the most solemn sacrifices only. Though as yet we have no key as to the character of the music which the Udgātṛis performed, we can see from the numerous and elaborate rules, however unintelligible, that their music was more than mere chanting. The words of their songs were collected in the order of the sacrifice, and this is what we possess under the name of *Sāma-veda-samhitā*, or the Prayer-Book of the Udgātṛi priests.

A third class of priests, the Hotṛis, recited certain hymns during the sacrifice in praise of the gods to whom any particular act of the sacrifice was addressed. Their recitation was loud and distinct, and required the most accurate knowledge of the rules of euphony or *Śikshā*.

The Hotṛis, as a class, were the most highly educated order of priests. They were supposed to know both the proper pronunciation and the meaning of their hymns, the order and employment of which was taught in the Brāhmaṇas of the Bahvṛichas. But, while both the Adhvaryus and Udgātṛis were confessedly unable to perform their duties without the help of their Prayer Books, the Hotṛis were supposed to be so well versed in the ancient sacred poetry, as contained in the ten Maṇḍalas of the Rig-veda, that no separate Prayer Book or Samhitā was ever arranged for their special benefit.

The Hotṛi learnt, from the Brāhmaṇa, or in later times, from the Sūtra, what special duties he had to perform. He knew from these sources the beginnings or the names of the hymns which he had to recite it every part of the service.

The most ancient name for a priest by profession was *Purohita*, which only means one placed before. The original occupation of the *Purohita* may simply have been to perform the usual sacrifices; but, with the ambitious policy of the Brahmans, it soon became a stepping-stone to political power. Thus we read in the Aitarīya-Brāhmaṇa:

> Breath does not leave him before time; he lives to an old age; he goes to his full time, and does not die again, who has a Brahman as guardian of his land, as *Purohita*. He conquers power by power; obtains strength by strength; the people obey him, peaceful and of one mind.[1]

[1] Abridged from MAX MULLER, *Ancient Sanskrit Literature*, pp. 471–487.

Briefly put the three definite orders among the Brahmans, their Vedas and their names are:

1. *hotṛi* means 'sacrificer' from *hu* = pour on the fire. The hotṛi recites *richas*, 'praises': hence comes the *Rig-veda*.

2. *udgātri* means 'singer' from *udgai* = sing. The udagatṛi raises *sāmāni* 'chants': hence comes the *Sāma-veda*.

3. *adhvaryu* means 'working priest' from *adhvara* = a ritual act. The *adhvaryu* mutters *yajunṣi*, 'sacrificial formulae': hence comes the *Yajur-veda*.

The sacrificial instruments

It is not worth while to attempt to draw up a list of all the implements and utensils that were used in sacrifices, after sacrifice had been developed in the times of the Brāhmaṇas. Many pots, three kinds of ladles for pouring clarified butter on the fire, a smaller ladle or spoon for conveying the butter from the pot to larger ladles, caldrons, beakers, the sacred kusa grass, on which the gods might sit and on which soma-juice was poured out are all mentioned in the Atharva-veda (xviii. 4). The *yūpa* was the post to which the animal victim was tied. There were, of course, knives and choppers for cutting up the victim. The *sphya* was a wooden instrument shaped something like a sword for stirring the boiling rice, or perhaps for trimming the mound used as an altar. One of the priests had to hold it up high so long as the chief ceremonies lasted to keep off evil spirits [1].

There was also the press-stone for crushing the soma-plant. All of these were multiplied or modified as the ritual of the great sacrifices was developed.

The first of these great sacrifices, originally a very simple act, was the soma sacrifice. Though a book of

[1] MURDOCH, *Account of Vedas*, p. 54.

the Rig-veda and the whole of the Sāma-veda were eventually devoted to the chants to be raised during the performance of the soma sacrifices no clear idea of the ceremonies can be gained from those books. It is from the Brāhmaṇas of the Sāma-veda that the needful information has to be obtained, and when it has been obtained it is not of very clear significance. In fact there is little of interest in these soma sacrifices. They were celebrated in a variety of ways. It may be imagined that originally the juice of the plant was merely crushed from its stems and collected, and then part was poured out for the gods and part was drunk by the worshippers. But this simplicity soon departed.

The soma sacrifice

One soma sacrifice, the Agnishtoma, celebrated in spring-time was in praise of Agni; it required the ministrations of sixteen priests. It occupied only one day, during which the soma-juice was pressed from the plant, the essential part of the ceremony, three times; but there were detailed preparatory rites, including the initiation (*dīksha*) of the man who made the sacrifice and his wife.

There is one classification of the soma sacrifices according to the length of time which they lasted which shows that they extended to as many as twelve days in one case. This last sacrifice could only be performed by Brahmans, which is an indication that it belongs to the later Vedic times; a large number of Brahmans must join to perform it, and they might lengthen out the rites to a hundred days, or to some years. The objects for which the sacrifice was offered were offspring, cattle, wealth, fame, theological learning, skill to perform cere-

monies, and heaven. For gaining heaven a soma-sacrifice was indispensable, for the sacred soma-juice was thought to unite the sacrificer with the celestial king Soma and so to make the worshipper an associate of the gods and an inhabitant of the celestial world.[1]

Animal sacrifices

Animal sacrifices were always of a more or less special character among the Aryans. According to the Atharva-veda (xii. 2. 48) a draft-ox was burned with the corpse of a dead man presumably for the dead to ride in the next world. The goat and the horse were sacrificed together at the horse-sacrifice.[2] At one sacrifice, probably a very unusual sacrifice, performed once in five years, called the *Pañcha sarādīya sava*, seventeen young cows were offered. Bullocks, buffaloes and deer were also sacrificed, sometimes in large numbers. The White Yajur-veda mentions 327 domestic animals, including oxen, cows, milch-cows that were to be offered along with the horse at the great horse sacrifice, and the Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa mentions 180 domestic animals, such as cows, bulls, goats that are to be sacrificed.[3] But though it is quite clear that animals were offered it is not easy to see how, even great kings could command such holocausts. In Vedic times they were impossible in the form in which they are described in the White Yajur-veda and in the Brāhmaṇas. Unfortunately it is from these later sacrificial manuals that accounts of these sacrifices have to be obtained.

Reference has been made in the first section of this

[1] HAUG, *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa*, Introduction, quoted in Macdonald's *Brāhmaṇas*, 17, 132.

[2] *Rig-veda*, i. 162. 2, 9 and i. 163. 12.

[3] *Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa*, ii. 651.

book to Dr. Rajendralala Mitra's careful papers on the whole subject of meat-eating, animal sacrifices and human sacrifices collected and published in 1881 in two volumes under the title *The Indo-Aryans*.[1] His investigations and those of other scholars on the subject seem to establish the following facts.

The Āśvalāyana Sūtra mentions several sacrifices of which the slaughter of cattle formed a part. One of them, in the Gṛihya Sūtra, is worthy of special notice. As it is called *Śūlagava*, or 'spitted cow.'

In the Brāhmaṇas there are many rules laid down for many kinds of Cow-sacrifices. Going back to the ancient Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa, of the Black Yajur-veda, 'that grand store-house of Vedic rituals which affords the fullest insight into the religious life of ancient India,' as Dr. Rajendralala Mitra calls it, many ceremonies are named, which required the meat of cattle for their performance; and considerable stress is laid on the kind and character of the cattle which should be slaughtered for the supply of meat for the gratification of particular divinities.[2] The following summary presents the main facts:

> Thus, among the *Kāmya Iṣtis*, or minor sacrifices with special prayers, we have to sacrifice a dwarf ox to Vishṇu; a drooping-horned bull with a blaze on the forehead to Indra as the author of sacrifices or as the destroyer of Vṛitra; a thick-legged cow (*Pṛiśni-saktha*) to the same as the regent of wind; a white-blazed drooping-horned bull to the same, as the destroyer of enemies, or as the wielder of the thunderbolt; a barren cow to Vishṇu and Varuṇa; a bull that has

[1] Published by Newman, Calcutta, in 1881.

[2] *Indo-Aryans*, see vol. i, pp. 361–3, 374–6.

been already sanctified at a marriage or other ceremony to Indra and Agni; a polled ox to Brahmaṇāspati; a black cow to Pūshan; the cow that has brought forth only once to Vāyu; a brown ox to Indra, the invigorator of our faculties; a speckled or piebald ox to Sāvita; a cow having two colours to Mitra and Varuṇa; a red cow to Rudra; a white barren cow to Sūrya; a white ox to Mitra; a cow fit to conceive to Bhaga, etc. In a rule in connexion with the Aśvamedha, the same authority lays down that sacrificial animals should differ in caste, colour, age, etc., according to the gods for whom they are designed.[1]

In the larger ceremonies, such as the Rājasuya, the Vājapeya, and the Aśvamedha, the slaughter of cattle was an invariable accompaniment. Of the first two the Go-sava formed an integral part, and it ensured to the performer independent dominion in this world, and perfect freedom in the next to saunter about as he liked, even as the cow roams untrammelled in the forest.[2]

In its account of the Aśvamedha, the Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa recommends 180 domestic animals to be sacrificed, including horses, bulls, cows, goats, deer, nīlgaos.[3] A number of wild animals were, likewise, on such occasions, brought to the sacrificial posts, but they were invariably let loose after consecration. The authority, however, does not distinctly say how many heads of cattle were required for the purpose; the number, perhaps, varied according to the exigencies of the guests, among whom crowned heads with their unwieldy retinues formed so prominent a part, and whose requirements were regulated by a royal standard. But even the strictly ceremonial offering was not, evidently, completed with a solitary cow or two. Out

[1] *Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa*, iii. p. 658. [2] *Taittirīya Araṇyaka*.
[3] *Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa*, ii. 651.

of the 'ten times eighteen' heads required, a great many must have been bulls, cows and heifers of diverse colours and ages.

The Brāhmaṇa notices another ceremony in which a large number of cattle were immolated for the gratification of the Maruts and the enjoyment of their worshippers. This was called the *Pañcha sarādīya sava*, or the 'quinquennium of autumnal sacrifices.' It evidently held the same position in ancient India which Durgā Pūjā does in the calendar of modern Hindus. It used to be celebrated, as its name implies, for five years successively, the period of the ceremony being limited to five days on each occasion, beginning with the new moon which would be in conjunction with the Viśākhā constellation. This happened in September or October. The most important elements of the ceremony were seventeen five-year old, humpless, dwarf bulls, and as many dwarf heifers under three years. The former were duly consecrated, and then liberated, and the latter, after proper invocations and ceremonial observances, immolated; three on each day, the remaining two being added to the sacrifice on the last day, to celebrate the conclusion of the ceremony for the year. The Tāṇḍya Brāhmaṇa of the Sāma-veda notices this ceremony, but it recommends cattle of a different colour for each successive year. According to it the seventh or eighth of the waxing moon in Aśvinī for the first year, and the 6th of Krittikā for the following years were the more appropriate for it. The origin of the sacrifice, according to a Vedic legend, is due to Prajāpati. Once on a time he wished to be rich in wealth and dependents; 'he perceived the *Pañcha sarādīya*; he seized it, and performed a sacrifice with it, and thereby became great in wealth and dependents.' 'Whoever wishes to be great,' adds the Veda, 'let him worship through the *Pañcha sarādīya*. Thereby, verily, he will be great.'[1] Elsewhere it is

[1] *Taittirīya Brāhmana*, ii. 2.

said that this ceremony ensures thoroughly independent dominion, and that a sage of the name of Kāndama attained it through this means.

'That the animal slaughtered was intended for food,' says Dr. R. Mitra, 'is evident from the directions given in the Áśvalāyana Sūtra to eat of the remains of the offering; but to remove all doubt on the subject I shall quote here a passage from the Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa in which the mode of cutting up the victim after immolation is described in detail; it is scarcely to be supposed that the animal would be so divided if there was no necessity for distribution.'

A few extracts from this passage will be sufficient here:

> Separate its hide so that it may remain entire. Cut open its breast so as to make it appear like an eagle (with spread wings). Separate the forearms; divide the arms into spokes; separate successively in order the twenty-six ribs. Dig a trench for burying the excrements. Throw away the blood to the rākshasas. O slayer of cattle, O Adhrigu, accomplish your task; accomplish it according to rules.

The Gopatha Brāhmaṇa of the Atharva-veda gives in detail the names of the different individuals who are to receive shares of the meat for the parts they take in the ceremony. The following are a few of them:

> The Prastata is to receive the two jaws along with the tongue; the Pratiharta, the neck and the hump; the Udgāta, the eagle-like wings; the Neṣṭa, the right arm; the Sadasya, the left arm; the householder who ordains the sacrifice the two right feet; his wife, the two left feet, etc.

Diverse imprecations are hurled against those who

venture to depart from this order of distribution. The shares differed but all were allowed plentiful libations of soma juice.

It is impossible to think that such an elaborate ritual was ever observed in more ancient Vedic times. But, on the other hand, it is obvious that sacrifices of cows must have been offered in those more ancient days for they would not have been carried on in a later age without the sanction of earlier usage and it may fairly be concluded that these animal sacrifices were simple sacrificial feasts in which the god and his worshipper shared together the flesh of the sacred animal were part of the original worship of the earliest Aryans.

The Horse sacrifice

The *Aśvamedha* or horse-sacrifice was one of the most imposing of the great sacrifices (*mahākratu*). Two hymns in the Rig-veda show that it was performed from the very earliest times (*Rig-veda*, i. 162 and 163). It is fully described in the White Yajur-veda and in the Śatapatha and Taittirīya Brāhmaṇas, and was regarded as the most important and efficacious of animal sacrifices. It was a sacrifice that in later times could only be offered by a king of undisputed authority, for the sacrificial horse was allowed to wander for a whole year at will, followed by the army of the king performing the rite. If any chief dared to interfere with the horse his territory was seized; if he did not, he acknowledged himself to be a feudatory of the king who had sent out the horse. In either case the horse showed the way to conquest and if it survived the year it was clear proof of its owner's undisputed power. In earlier times it may have been a sacrifice offered before a chief set

out on an invading expedition into the territory of rival chieftains, but in the Rig-veda the object of the *Aśva-medha* is like other religious rites, the acquiring of wealth and posterity:

> May this good steed bring us all-sustaining riches, wealth in good kine, good horses, manly offspring.
> Freedom from sin may Aditi vouchsafe us: the steed with our oblations gain us lordship.
>
> *Rig-veda*, i. 162. 22.

It was in the later ritual that it was generally intended to secure victory and prosperity to the king who performed it, and many kings are said to have celebrated it for this purpose.

Yudhiṣṭira sacrificed a horse after the great war with the Kurus, to expiate all the sin of the war, and the Aśvamedha Parva of the Mahābhārata describes it. It was also performed to secure an heir to a king, and the Balākānda of the Rāmāyana tells how Dasaratha the father of Rama celebrated it before the birth of Rama. Practically our knowledge of the ritual is derived from these later accounts.

According to them the sacrifice began in the spring or summer. Then the animal after selection roamed with its body-guard of a hundred princes, a hundred nobles and a hundred servitors, while thanksgiving and the recital of the Vedas occupied those who remained in the king's city. When the year had expired the sacrifice was completed. It took three days, during which soma juice was pressed, the horse was bathed, and other animal sacrifices were performed. On the third day the horse was bound to the sacrificial post covered with a cloth and killed or suffocated. If the king wanted an

heir the chief queen had to remain under the cover with the dead horse all night.

Thus in the Rāmāyana the horse-sacrifice is employed by the childless Dasaratha as the means of obtaining sons. In the Balākānda it is said that his principal queen, Kausalyā, 'with three strokes slew that horse, experiencing great glee. And with the view of reaping merit, Kausalyā, with an undisturbed heart, passed one night with that horse.' According to the Rāmāyana, she acquired so much merit in this way that she bore Rama. There is no trace of this obscenity in the Rig-veda, and it may be cited as a conspicuous instance of the degradation of worship that was possible in the time of the Brāhmaṇas.[1]

When the queen had left the horse it was cut up and roasted. On the third day the king who had celebrated the sacrifice bathed, and gave gifts to the officiants.

That the horse was killed and its flesh cooked is evident from the following extract from the Rig-veda:

> What from thy body which with fire is roasted, when thou art set upon the spit, distilleth,—
>
> Let not that lie on earth or grass neglected, but to the longing gods let all be offered.
>
> They who, observing that the horse is ready, call out and say, 'The smell is good' remove it,
>
> And, craving meat, await the distribution,—may their approving help promote our labour.
>
> The trial-fork of the flesh-cooking caldron, the vessels out of which the broth is sprinkled,
>
> The warming-pots, the covers of the dishes, hooks, carving-boards,—all these attend the charger.
>
> The four-and-thirty ribs of the swift charger, kin to the gods, the slayer's hatchet pierces.

[1] WILSON, *Rig-veda*, ii. 13.

Cut ye with skill, so that the parts be flawless, and piece by piece dèclaring them dissect them.

Rig-veda, i. 162. 11-13, 18.

This hymn would be nonsense if the horse was not really killed and cooked. That the horse was to be actually immolated and that the body was cut up into fragments is clear; that these fragments were dressed, partly boiled, and partly roasted, is also undisputable; and although the expressions may be differently understood, yet there is little reason to doubt that part of the flesh was eaten by the assistants, part presented as a burnt offering to the gods.[1]

The horse, however, was comforted in the same hymn by the thought that it was going to the gods:—

Let not thy dear soul burn thee as thou comest, let not the hatchet linger in thy body.

Let not a greedy clumsy immolator, missing the joints, mangle thy limbs unduly.

Nó, here thou diest not, thou art not injured; by easy paths unto the gods thou goest.

The bays, the splendid deer are now thy fellows; and to the ass's pole is yoked the charger.

Rig-veda, i. 62. 20, 21.

The belief in the efficacy of human sacrifice is very ancient and widespread. Arabs, Canaanites, Moabites, Carthaginians, Greeks, Romans, Teutons, Britons and scores of other races and tribes have all practised it in various forms. In all cases there was the idea that such a terrible offering must be peculiarly efficacious. Such sacrifices in India have always been associated with the

[1] WILSON, *Introduction to Translation of Rig-veda*, vol. ii., pp. xiii–xiv.

indigenous deities worshipped by the Dravidian tribes. It was to such gods that human lives were offered when a newly excavated tank failed to produce sufficient water, or when a temple wall cracked, or the foundation of a bridge gave way. The fierce and cruel goddesses of later Hinduism, Chāmundā, Chandī, Durgā, Kālī, Māri and their sisters were really exalted Dravidian goddesses, and are declared to be appeased by human lives.

In modern times the offering to these goddesses is usually the blood of sheep, goats or fowls, but occasionally a devoted worshipper will offer a few drops of blood.

Blood offerings

'The offering of one's own blood' says Dr. Rajendralala Mitra, 'to the goddess is a mediaeval and modern rite. It is made by women, and there is scarcely a respectable house in all Bengal, the mistress of which has not, at one time or other, shed her blood under the notion of satisfying the goddess by the operation. Whenever her husband or a son is dangerously ill, a vow is made that, on the recovery of the patient, the goddess would be regaled with human blood, and in the first Durgā Pūjā following, or at the temple at Kālighāt, or at some other sacred fane, the lady performs certain ceremonies, and then bares her breast in the presence of the goddess, and with a nail-cutter (*naruna*) draws a few drops of blood from between her busts, and offers them to the divinity.'

In the same way women pierce their cheeks with silver skewers in honour of the definitely Dravidian goddess Kurumāyi at Woriur near Trichinopoly.

Such offerings are vestiges of the times when human lives were once offered to these Dravidian goddesses.

These were called *narabali*, the sacrifice of men. The Vedic human sacrifice has the more honourable title *puruṣamedha* 'the sacrifice of humanity', or 'of the hero'; but the two cannot easily be distinguished.

Of human sacrifices (*narabali*) the Kālikā Purāṇa composed in honour of Kālī or Durgā Devī says: 'By a human sacrifice attended by the forms laid down, Devī remains gratified for a thousand years, and by a sacrifice of three men one hundred thousand years.' The human sacrifice is described as *atibali*, the highest of all sacrifices.

In India to this day the belief exists and strange stories of such sacrifices find ready acceptance. A case now and then comes into court which shows that from time to time human beings actually are slain in sacrifice.

Human sacrifice

In 1900 in the Bombay Presidency the High Court upheld the conviction of three men for the murder of a child named Dagdi as a sacrifice to persuade a deity to reveal to the murderers the place where treasure was hidden. In Bellary in 1901 a Kuruba, a man belonging to one of the most ancient Dravidian tribes in South India was convicted of the murder of his own son in order to obtain treasure that the god Kona Irappa had promised to him on that condition. In the Bombay Presidency a charge of the murder of a girl-child to propitiate the malice of certain water-deities called 'mavlis' was proved and upheld on appeal against a Hindu woman named Bhagu, wife of Laxman, in November, 1910 and against Umi, wife of Jayaji in March, 1911. In 1912 the quiet town of Bezwada in the Madras Presidency was thrown into commotion because the Governor of Madras

was believed to have performed a human sacrifice at the foot of a hill in the neighbourhood in order to gain possession of hidden treasure. The origin of the rumour was that on his visit to Bezwada the Governor attended a meeting of Freemasons, held of course with closed doors.

The extreme merit of such a sacrifice is evident in many a vernacular legend. One such was given by Mr. H. R. Scott, M.A., in a paper on *The Gujerati Poets*[1] in which he relates a legend which appears in a poem by a Gujerati poet named Akho.

Akho was no Brahman or Vaniyo, but a working goldsmith. He began by being an enthusiastic Vaishnava of the Vallabhāchārya sect, but he was disillusioned, and in bitterness of soul he compared his Guru—the head of the sect—to an old bullock yoked in a cart he could not draw, a useless expense to his owner; nay, he compares him to a stone in the embrace of a drowning man, which sinks where it is expected to save. He defies current views about defilement, and says it is not external bathing but internal purity that is needed.

This story as recited by Akho is about Sagālshā Sheth, a very devout man who had an equally devout wife, Sandhyāvati, and the pair had one loving and much beloved son Selaiya. It was their practice never to eat a meal unless they could share it with some poor Sādhu or saint.

Gujerati legend

Once in the rainy season, there came a tremendous downpour, and it lasted for eight days and nights, during which it was not possible for any Sādhu to be found, and the pair

[1] Part of this was printed in the *Indian Social Reformer*, Bombay, of January 28, 1912.

fasted during this whole time. When the rain ceased, Sagālshā sent out a messenger to hunt up a Sādhu, and he found one in a temple on the out-skirts of the town; but the Sādhu was a loathsome, evil-smelling leper, covered with open sores. This did not deter Sagālshā, who ran to the place and implored the Sādhu to come and be his guest. The Sādhu, who was the god himself come in this guise to put his servant to the test, raised various objections, but Sagālshā saw through the disguise and recognized his lord, and met them all. The leper would not walk, nor would he sit in the carriage which Sagālshā Sheth offered to bring for him; he insisted on being placed in the holy cage in which the idol of the temple was kept, and on being carried by the Sheth's wife. This was done with much gladness, the devout pair regarding themselves as highly honoured, though the leper's sores soiled the woman's clothing, and the townsfolk turned out to laugh at the devout pair. But when the Sādhu had been brought to the house their troubles were not ended. He demanded meat, and the pair were rigid vegetarians! Yet in that too they submitted, and were about to send to the butcher's when the leper said he needed human flesh, and to provide that there was only one way. But as the poet says: 'It is when faced by some real difficulty that the true man reveals his character.' So Sagālshā went off to fetch his boy from school. He explained the matter as they walked along, and Selaiya, 'the bright-witted boy' as he is called, agreed to be sacrificed. One must die sometime, he says, and a death under these circumstances, and at the hand of a saint, is something to covet.

Besides, look at what others have done, and he goes over a list of those who had gladly died or suffered for the sake of piety, such as Karna, Harischandra. So the boy is sacrificed, willingly submitting himself to the knife. His mother is ordered by the inhuman Sādhu to put on her jewels, and dress in her brightest clothes, and show no sign of grief, or of reluctance to let her son be sacrificed.

And so the story goes on, till the climax is reached, and the god reveals himself, and praises the devotion of his servants and restores their son to life. Then he asks Sagālshā to choose a boon—'Ask what you will and I shall give it unto thee.' And the answer of the pious man is quite the finest thing in the poem, He asks nothing for himself, but says—'I only ask, my Master, that you may never again put any one to such a test.'

There can be no doubt, then, that in the Hinduism that has been influenced by Dravidian beliefs, and that as far back as Puranic times, the practice of human sacrifice was observed, though probably only on rare occasions.

The practice can further be traced back through the Brāhmaṇas to Vedic times, when human sacrifices were offered to Vedic deities to secure religious merit.

The whole subject of human sacrifice in Vedic times has been carefully investigated by Dr. Rajendralala Mitra in a paper originally published in the *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal.* Some Indian scholars had maintained that human sacrifices were not authorized in the Vedas, but were introduced in later times, but Dr. Rajendralala Mitra says: 'As a Hindu writing on the actions of my forefathers—remote as they are—it would have been a source of great satisfaction to me if I could

adopt this conclusion as true; but I regret I cannot do so consistently with my allegiance to the cause of history.'

His paper on the subject occupies eighty-four pages in his *Indo-Aryans*, with many quotations both in Sanskrit and English. The following is a brief summary. First there is a description of the prevalence of human sacrifices in all parts of the world, both in ancient and modern times, and Dr. Mitra finds that benign and humane as was the spirit of the ancient Hindu religion, it was not opposed to animal sacrifice; on the contrary, most of the principal rites required the immolation of large numbers of various kinds of beasts and birds. One of the rites enjoined required the performer to walk deliberately into the depth of the ocean to drown himself to death. This was called *Mahāprasthāna*, and is forbidden in the present age. Another, an expiatory one, required the sinner to burn himself to death, on a blazing pyre. This has not yet been forbidden except by British law. The gentlest of beings, the simple-minded women of Bengal, for a long time used to throw their first-born babes to the sacred river Ganges at Sagar Island, and this was preceded by a religious ceremony, though it was not authorized by any of the ancient rituals. If the spirit of the Hindu religion has tolerated, countenanced or promoted such acts, it is not unreasonable or inconsistent, to suppose that it should have, in primitive times, recognized the slaughter of human beings as calculated to appease, gratify, and secure the grace of the gods.

The clear evidence recorded in the Vedas is next examined. The earliest reference to human sacrifice occurs in the first book of the Rig-veda. It contains

seven hymns supposed to have been recited by one Śunahśepa when he was bound to a stake preparatory to being immolated. The story is given in the Aitareya Brāhmaṇa of the Rig-veda.

The story of Sunahsepa

King Harischandra had made a vow to sacrifice his first-born to Varuṇa, if that deity would bless him with children. A child was born, named Rohita, and Varuṇa claimed it; but the father evaded fulfilling his promise under various pretexts until Rohita, grown up to man's estate, ran away from home into the forest and wandered there for six years, while Varuṇa afflicted the father with dropsy. At last Rohita met a starving Brahman named Ajigarta who consented to sell to him his son Śunahśepa for a hundred cows, to be offered as a substitute for himself. Varuṇa accepted the substitute saying 'a Brahman is worth more than a Kshatriya.' When Śunahśepa had been prepared, they found nobody to bind him to the sacrificial post. Then Ajigarta said, 'Give me another hundred cows, and I will bind him.' They gave him another hundred cows, and he bound him. When Śunahśepa had been prepared and bound, when hymns had been sung, and he had been led round the fire, they found nobody to kill him. Next Ajigarta said, 'Give me another hundred cows and I will kill him.' They gave him another hundred cows, and he came whetting the knife to slay his son. Then Śunahśepa is said to have recited hymns praising Agni, Indra, Mitra, Varuṇa, and other gods.

One may be quoted.[1] Its concluding verses deserve special attention.

[1] *Rig-veda*, i. 25.

1. Whatever law of thine, O god, O Varuṇa, as we are men,
Day after day we violate.
2. Give us not as a prey to death, to be destroyed by thee in wrath,
To thy fierce anger when displeased.
3. To gain thy mercy, Varuṇa, with hymns we bind thy heart, as binds
The charioteer his tethered horse.
4. They flee from me dispirited, bent only on obtaining wealth,
As to their nests the birds of air.
5. When shall we bring, to be appeased, the hero, lord of warrior might,
Him, the far-seeing Varuṇa?
6. This, this with joy, they both accept in common: never do they fail
The ever-faithful worshipper.
7. He knows the path of birds that fly through heaven, and, sovran of the sea,
He knows the ships that are thereon.
8. True to his holy law, he knows the twelve moons with their progeny[1]:
He knows the moon of later birth.
9. He knows the pathway of the wind, the spreading, high, and mighty wind:
He knows the gods who dwell above,
10. Varuṇa, true to holy law, sits down among his people; he,
Most wise, sits there to govern all.
11. From thence perceiving he beholds all wondrous things, both what hath been,
And what hereafter will be done.
12. May that Āditya, very wise, make fair paths for us all our days:
May he prolong our lives for us.

[1] The days.

13. Varuṇa, wearing golden mail, hath clad him in a shining robe:
His spies are seated round about.
14. The god whom enemies threaten not, nor those who tyrannize o'er men,
Nor those whose minds are bent on wrong.
15. He who gives glory to mankind, not glory that is incomplete,
To our own bodies giving it.
16. Yearning for the wide-seeing one, my thoughts move onward unto him.
As kine unto their pastures move.
17. Once more together let us speak, because my meath[1] is brought: priest-like,
Thou eatest what is dear to thee.
18. Now saw I him whom all may see, I saw his car above the earth:
He hath accepted these my songs.
19. Varuṇa, hear this call of mine: be gracious unto us this day:
Longing for help I cried to thee.
20. Thou, O wise god, art lord of all, thou art the king of earth and heaven:
Hear, as thou goest on thy way.
21. Release us from the upper bond, untie the bond between and loose,
The bonds below, that I may live.

Varuṇa, pleased with the hymns of Śunaḥśepa, set him free and the youth, disgusted with his father, forsook him, and became the adopted son of Viśvamitra, his maternal uncle.

Like Dr. Rajendralala Mitra, Prof. Max Müller believed that the story in the Aitareya Brāhmaṇa showed that, 'at that early time, the Brahmans were familiar

[1] Usually *mead*, a sweet liquor.

with the idea of human sacrifices, and that men were purchased for that purpose.'

According to the Brahmanic ritual the *Puruṣamedha*, as a regular part of Vedic worship, was celebrated for the attainment of supremacy over all created beings. Its performance was limited to Brahmans and Kshatriyas. It could be commenced only on the tenth of the waxing moon in the month of Chaitra (March-April), and altogether required forty days for its performance, though only five out of the forty days were specially called the days of the *Puruṣamedha*. Eleven sacrificial posts were required for it, and to each of them was tied an animal fit for Agni and Soma, the human victims being placed between the posts.

Purusa Medha

The full description of this rite occurs in the Vājasaneyi Samhitā of the White Yajurveda. The passage in it bearing on the subject is supposed to describe the different kinds of human victims appropriate to particular gods and goddesses. The section in which it occurs opens with three verses which, the commentator says, were intended to serve as mantras for offerings of human victims. Then follows a series of 179 names of gods in the dative case, each followed by the name of one or more persons in the objective case; thus: 'to Brahma, a Brāhmaṇa, to the Maruts, a Vaiśya,' etc. The copula verb is omitted and the reader may supply whatever verb he chooses. These names occur also in the Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa of the Black Yajurveda, with only a few slight variations, but here in some cases the verb *ālabhate* follows. This is derived from the root *labh*, 'to take, lay hold of' and the commentators have

generally accepted the term to mean 'should be slaughtered.'[1]

Dr. Rajendralala Mitra quotes the 179 names and gives explanatory extracts from the Brāhmaṇas and the laws of Āpastambha. Probably the number of men actually sacrificed was few, in spite of the large numbers mentioned in the Brāhmaṇas, but whether they were few or not, these passages show that the ritual provided that men should be sacrificed.

The Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa says men are sacrificed and contains a verse which is remarkable for the manner in which it speaks of the human victim. It runs,

> Let a fire offering be made with the head of a man. The offering is the rite itself (*Yajna*); therefore does it make a man part of the sacrificial animals; and hence it is that among animals man is included in sacrifice.

Reviewing the whole of the evidence Dr. Rajendralala Mitra gives the following summary of the conclusions which may be fairly drawn from the facts cited above:

1. That looking to the history of human civilization and the rituals of the Hindus, there is nothing to justify the belief that in ancient times the Hindus were incapable of sacrificing human beings to their gods.

2. That the Śunaḥśepa hymns of the Rig-veda most probably refer to a human sacrifice.

3. That the Aitareya Brāhmaṇa refers to an actual and not a typical human sacrifice.

[1] The long passages from the Taittīriya and Śatapatha Brāhmaṇas are given in full and discussed in Dr. K. S. Macdonald's *The Brāhmaṇas of the Vedas*, pp. 49 ff.

4. That the *Puruṣamedha* originally required the actual sacrifice of men.

5. That the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa sanctions human sacrifice in some cases, though it makes the *Puruṣamedha* emblematic.

6. That the Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa enjoins the sacrifice of a man at the Horse sacrifice.

7. That the Purāṇas recognize human sacrifices to Chandikā or Durgā, but prohibit the *Puruṣamedha* rite.

8. That the Tantras enjoin human sacrifices to Chandikā, and require that when human victims are not available, the effigy of a human being should be sacrificed to her.

To this must be added the evidence for the practice in purely Dravidian sacrifices which have been continued to modern times.

The presumption is thus strong that the real human sacrifice belonged to the time of the early Aryans and that as time went on it was replaced by an emblematic offering, even as the Vaishnavas have, within the last five or six hundred years, replaced the sacrifice of goats and buffaloes to Chandikā by that of pumpkins and sugar-cane at Durgā Pūjā. Human sacrifice has disappeared from modern Hindu ceremonial but traces of the practice still remain, and the sacrifice is even now occasionally accomplished among the Dravidian tribes.

The decline of sacrificial worship

It is beyond the scope of this hand-book to trace the history, so far as it can be discerned, of the process by which the Aryans passed through the period in which, as the Brāhmaṇas and these accounts of the later elaborate

sacrificial ceremonial show, the scrupulous performance of religious ritual was the chief feature of their religious life. Sacrifices of such magnitude, ritual so complex cannot have been usual at any time, and a priesthood which insisted on such impossible ceremonialism compelled the minds of thoughtful men to revolt and to seek a purer and higher method of coming into touch with the Unseen.

The rise of this class of thinkers indicated immense changes in the habits of life of those who had wandered into India with their cattle, with arms in their hands, worshipping the sky and the fire and the rain. The Aryans had now become the settled inhabitants of India. There were many who possessed wealth, many who gave themselves to a life of retirement and thought, and that ideal had laid hold on the imagination of the times. Every forest had its hermit. The result was that the teaching of the sages received the obedience that the priesthood had claimed. The way of salvation taught in the Upanishads, or by Mahāvīra the leader of the Jains, or by Gautama the Buddha, put an end to the sacrificial religion which we see in its exaggerated form in the Brāhmaṇas. The *Puruṣamedha*, the *Aśvamedha* and all the multitude of animal sacrifices and the eating of flesh among the higher classes ceased. The oblations of soma were no longer offered, and the drinking of soma became unknown. The old gods, Dyaus and Varuṇa and Agni passed away, and were succeeded in the newer Hinduism that arose through and after the Buddhist revolt by Vishṇu and Krishna and Rāma and Śiva.

The Code of Manu which was drawn up perhaps about one hundred or two hundred years after the

time of Christ, that is about seven or eight hundred years after the time of the Brāhmaṇas, says that the prescribed beasts and birds are to be slain by Brahmans for the sacrifice; and also for the support of dependents; for Agastya did so formerly, and adds that there were, indeed, offerings of eatable beasts and birds in the ancient sacrifices and in the oblations of Brahmans and Kshatriyas.[1]

This reads as if the ancient system was becoming a thing of the past. In the same section Manu says:

> He who gives no creature willingly the pain of confinement or death, but seeks the good of all, enjoys bliss without end. Flesh cannot be obtained without injury to animals, and the slaughter of animals obstructs the way to heaven; therefore one should avoid flesh. . . . He who during a hundred years annually performs the horse sacrifice, and he who entirely abstains from flesh, enjoy for their virtue an equal reward. . . . In eating flesh, in drinking intoxicating liquors, and in carnal intercourse there is no sin, for such enjoyments are natural; but abstention from them produces great reward.
>
> *Mānava Dharma-śāstra*, v. 46, 48, 53, 56.

This is different view to that of the early Aryans. It is illustrated in another passage:

> Om is the supreme Brahma; suppressions of breath the highest austerity; but there is nothing more exalted than the Gāyatrī; truth is better than silence.
>
> All the Vedic rites, oblational (and) sacrificial, pass away; but this imperishable syllable *Om* is to be known to be Brahma and also Prajāpati.
>
> The sacrifice of muttering (this word, etc.), is better by tenfold than the regular sacrifice; if inaudible, it

[1] *Mānava Dharma-śāstra*, v. 22, 23.

is a hundredfold (better); and a thousandfold, if mental.

Mānava Dharma-śāstra, ii. 83–85.

And quite a new and spiritualized view of sacrifice is set forth in Manu's definition of the five great sacrifices that the householder shall perform daily.

These are as follows:

Teaching and studying the Vedas is the Veda sacrifice.

Offering cakes and water is the sacrifice to the fathers (pitṛis).

An offering to fire is the sacrifice to the gods.

An offering of food is the sacrifice to the goblins (bhūtas).

Hospitality to guests is the sacrifice to men.

Mānava Dharma-śāstra, iii. 70.

Though the idea of sacrifices of animals and human beings has persisted in the beliefs of the castes whose religion was much influenced by or derived from the religion of the Dravidians and other primitive races in India, it may be safely asserted that the more truly Aryan tribes ceased to perform such sacrifices after the time of the Buddha.

VI. THE PRAYERS OF THE ARYANS

THE man who believes that there is a god or superhuman being of any sort tries to speak to that deity in some fashion. And the prayers of men are always worth careful consideration. Sometimes they are the repetition of conventional formulae, or mantras, believed to be grateful to the Divine.

Thus the mantra of the Bhāgavata worshippers of Krishna is:

Om namo Bhagavate Vāsudevāya, 'Om! reverence to the adorable Vāsudeva (Krishna)'.

Of the early Buddhist:

Om namo Bhagavate, 'Om! reverence to the Adorable'.

Of the later Buddhist:

Namo Amitābhāya, 'Reverence to Amitābha'.

Of the Śaiva Siddhāntin:

Śivāya nama, 'Reverence to Śiva'.

Of the followers of Rāmānuja:

Om Rāmāya namaḥ, 'Om! reverence to Rāma'.

Of the Vallabhāchāris:

Śri Kṛishṇaḥ śaraṇam mama, 'Holy Krishna is my refuge'.

But prayer is much more than adoration of this mechanical kind. It is the utterance of the heart's desire to god. In it may be seen what a man seeks for

himself, what he wishes towards others, what he hopes and fears, whether he opens his eyes with gladness and what makes him despair. The prayers of Robert Louis Stevenson at Vailima show us his own brave, bright soul. In the book of Psalms we learn to know the life-history, the penitence, the sense of moral responsibility and the longing after righteousness that mark the pilgrimage of the Hebrew towards God. The prayers in the Vedas became merely formal repetitions in after times. Perhaps they had become so even in the days when they were collected into the Rig-veda. But they had once been the real utterances of the needs of living men in a strange world. They are memorials, to be examined reverently, of the religious emotions of men at the dawning time in Asia. Much more than the scanty records of their gods, and of the sacrifices that they offered to their gods, do these prayers show us what manner of men the Aryans were.

These prayers also manifest what the worshipper conceived the character of his god to be. If he did not think his god to be capable of fierce wrath he would not ask him to hurl his thunderbolts on his enemies. If he did not believe that his god cared to save his worshippers from drought, no prayers would go up to the heavens for rain. In these prayers then we can gather at least the outlines of the disposition and attributes of the Aryan's gods. These outlines cannot be clear. The confusion of the attributes of one god with those of another, or rather the promiscuous attributing of all qualities to almost every god named prevents us from being able to state definitely how any particular god appeared to his worshippers, and it seems scarcely likely that the early

Aryan did discern very carefully between the characters of the various gods to whom he prayed. Speaking generally he seems to have had thoughts about the gods, the Devas, as a class, and to have addressed this or that particular god according to preference rather than for reasons that can be defined.

The prayers in the Vedas naturally contain much adoration. The god addressed is praised for his great deeds, his valour, his beauty, his knowledge.

Adoration

Agni is thus addressed:

Agni I hold as herald, the munificent, the gracious, son of strength, who knoweth all that live, as holy singer, knowing all.

i. 127. 1.

To Agni I present a newer mightier hymn, I bring my words and song unto the son of strength,

Who, offspring of the waters, bearing precious things, sits on the earth, in season, dear invoking priest.

i. 143. 1.

Indra is thus addressed:

To Indra Dyaus the Asura hath bowed him down, to Indra mighty earth with wide extending tract, to win the light, with wide spread tracts.

All gods of one accord have set Indra in front, pre-eminent.

i. 131. 1.

Thou, god without a second.

i. 32. 12.

Indra is praised for his capacity to drink soma:

Then Indra at a single draught drank the contents of thirty pails,

Pails that were filled with soma juice.

vii. 66. 4.

The Maruts are thus addressed:

Come hither Maruts, on your lightning-laden cars, sounding with sweet songs, armed with lances, winged with steeds.

i. 88. 1.

The gods are sometimes praised for their beauty, One of the epithets most commonly applied to Indra, says Muir, is *sus'ipra*, or *s'iprin*, in the interpretation of which Sāyaṇa wavers between 'the god with handsome cheeks' or 'with handsome nose.' Agni is called lord of the lovely look.

ii. 1. 8.

The broad-tressed Sinīvālī is thus described:

With lovely fingers, lovely arms, prolific Mother of many sons—

Present the sacred gifts to her, to Sinīvālī queen of men.

ii. 32. 7.

The student of the Vedic hymns will notice first of all that the majority of the petitions contained in them are not for spiritual blessings, but for the wealth and the welfare that must have seemed most desirable to men settling in a new land, living in new conditions of climate, and face to face with troublesome and dangerous enemies. They ask frankly for cows, for horses, for sons, for long life in the land, for protection from the assaults of their enemies, for victory in their expeditions against those enemies, and for relief in times of drought. It is quite true to say that the things that they could see were what they desired. 'The things above', the invisible and the spiritual are not the great objects of those early singers.

Petitions

A brief classified selection of some of the supplica-

tions actually uttered by them, by men four thousand years ago, will help to prove this.

i. For help

It is only natural that there should be many prayers to the gods for help in the long struggle with the races which were in possession of the land before the Aryans entered it. The invasion did not occur all at once, nor was the conquest completed in any brief series of campaigns. For centuries band after band of Aryans made its way into new territory, and where they went they had to encounter their darker-skinned foes, and so, all the time that they were fighting their way into India from the Indus to the Jumna or the Ganges, petitions go up to the gods for the destruction of their enemies, and for the destruction of the demons who are the gods of their enemies.

O Agni, radiant one, to whom the holy oil is poured, burn up our enemies whom fiends protect.

i. 12. 5.

Destroy this ass, O Indra, who in tones discordant brays to thee. Slay each reviler, and destroy him who in secret injures us.

i. 29. 5 and 7.

Consume for ever all demons and sorcerers, consume thou each devouring fiend.

i. 36. 20.

Cast thy dart, knowing thunderer, at the Dasyu.

i. 103. 3.

Crunch up on every side the dogs who bark at us: slay ye our foes, O Aśvins.

i. 182. 4.

Drive from us with thy tongue, O god, the man who doeth evil deeds, the mortal who would strike us dead.

vi. 16. 32.

Annihilate the fools, slay them and burn them up; Chase them away from us, pierce the voracious ones.

Against the foe of prayer, devourer of raw flesh, the vile fiend, fierce of eye, keep ye perpetual hate.

The fiend, O Agni, who designs to injure the essence of our food, kine, steeds, of bodies,

May he, the adversary, thief, and robber, sink to destruction, both himself and offspring.

May he be swept away, himself and children. May all the three earths press him down beneath them.

May his fair glory, O ye gods, be blighted, who in the day or night would fain destroy us.

vii. 104. 1. 2. 10. 11.

Whatever mortal with the power of demons fain would injure us, may he, impetuous, suffer harm by his own deeds.

viii. 18. 13.

With fervent heat exterminate the demons; destroy the fiends with burning flame, O Agni.

Destroy with fire the foolish gods' adorers; blaze and destroy the insatiable monsters.

x. 87. 14.

ii. For preservation

Besides prayers for deliverance from enemies there are many petitions for preservation from dangers. Among them are supplications for safety from wolves and snakes.

In luckless game I call on you for succour: strengthen us also on the field of battle.

With undiminished blessings, O ye Aśvins, for evermore both night and day protect us.

i. 112. 24.

Not to the fanged that bites, not to the toothless: give not us up, thou conqueror to the spoiler.

i. 189. 5.

If any wolf or robber fain would harm us, therefrom O Varuṇa, give thou us protection.

ii. 28. 10.

Savitar, god, send far away all sorrows and calamities.

And send us only what is good.

v. 82. 5.

May wealthy Indra as our good protector, lord of all treasures, favour us with succour,

Baffle our foes, and give us rest and safety.

vi. 47. 12.

Give us not up to any evil creature, as spoil to wolf or she wolf, O ye holy.

For ye are they who guide aright our bodies, ye are the rulers of our speech and vigour.

vi. 51. 6.

May they—Earth, Aditi, Indra, Bhaga, Pūshan—increase our lord, increase the fivefold people.

Giving good help, good refuge, goodly guidance, be they our good deliverers, good protectors.

vi. 51. 11.

May the foe's threatening arrow pass us by.

vii. 34. 13.

In thy kind grace and favour may we still be strong: expose us not to foe's attack.

With manifold assistance guard and succour us, and bring us to felicity.

viii. 3. 2.

Do ye, O bounteous gods, protect our dwelling place by day and night:

With you for our defenders may we go unharmed.

viii. 25. 11.

Prayers for prosperity, for welfare in the affairs of the homestead and the field, for wealth of cattle and

in spoils won from the enemy occur in almost every hymn. The constant references to cattle, as wealth desired or as spoil to be won from the enemy, show that in those early days the Aryans in India were largely a pastoral people, but horses and gold are also among the possessions that they prize.

iii. For welfare

Grant us high fame, O Indra; grant riches; bestowing thousands, those fair fruits of earth borne home in carts.

i. 9. 8.

O soma drinker, ever true, utterly hopeless though we be,
Do thou, O Indra, give us hope of beauteous horses and of kine,
In thousands, O most wealthy one.

i. 29. 1.

Will ye then, O Maruts, grant us riches, durable, rich in men, defying onslaught.
A hundred, thousand-fold, ever increasing?

i. 64. 15.

May thy rich worshippers win food, O Agni, and princes gain long life who bring oblation.
May we get booty from our foe in battle.

i. 73. 5.

May I not live, O Varuṇa, to witness my wealthy liberal, dear friend's destitution.
King, may I never lack well-ordered riches.

ii. 29. 7.

May Indra evermore be our protector, and unimperilled may we win the booty.

i. 102. 11.

Auspicious Sītā (the furrow personified) come thou near: we venerate and worship thee.

That thou may bless and prosper us and bring us fruits abundantly.

May Indra press the furrow down. May Pūshan guide its course aright.

May she (the sky) rich in milk, be drained for us through each succeeding year.

Happily let the shares turn up the ploughland, happily go the ploughers with the oxen.

iv. 57. 6-8.

O Agni, bring hither ample riches to our nobles wherewith we may enjoy ourselves.

vii. 1. 24.

Shall the immortal sit aloof inactive? O wondrous Indra, bring us wondrous riches.

vii. 20. 7.

May the great lords of truth protect and aid us: blest to us be our horses and our cattle.

vii. 35. 12.

O Indu, Soma, send us now great opulence from every side.

ix. 40. 3.

Pour out on us abundant food when thou art pressed, O Indu, wealth
In kine and gold and steeds and strength.

ix. 41. 4.

iv. For rain

Rain, essential to all pastoral and agricultural prosperity in India, is the subject of many a petition. Indra who slays the demon Vṛittra who prevents rain is frequently addressed for his assistance.

Unclose, our manly hero, thou for ever bounteous, yonder cloud,
For us, thou irresistible.

i. 7. 6.

I crave thy powers, I crave thy mighty friendship; full many a team goes to the Vṛittra-slayer. Great is the laud; we seek the Prince's favour. Be thou, O Maghavān, our guard and keeper.

iii. 31. 14.

The rain-god, Parjanya, is thus addressed:

Lift up the mighty vessel, pour down water and let the liberated streams rush forward.

Saturate both the earth and the heaven with fatness, and for the cows let there be drink abundant.

v. 83. 8.

v. For health

Health and long life are among of the gifts that all races of men have prized. There are many prayers for these favours in the Vedas:

O Indra, son of Kuśika, drink our libation with delight.

Prolong our life anew, and cause the seer to win a thousand gifts.

i. 10. 11.

The rich, the healer of disease (Brahmaṇaspati), who giveth wealth, increaseth store,

The prompt—may he be with us still.

i. 18. 2.

Sūrya, remove my heart's disease, take from me this my yellow hue.

To parrots and to starlings let us give away my yellowness.

i. 50. 11.

Aided by these, O Agni, may we conquer steeds with steeds, men with men, heroes with heroes,

Lords of the wealth transmitted by our fathers: and may our princes live a hundred winters.

i. 73. 9.

Thou over all, O Varuṇa, art sovran, be they gods, immortal, or be they mortals.

Grant unto us to see a hundred autumns: ours be the happy lives of our forefathers.

ii. 27. 10.

Long let our life, O Agni, be extended.

iv. 12. 6.

Accept, O Maruts, graciously this hymn of mine that we may live a hundred winters through its power.

v. 54. 15.

Be gracious, Indra, let my days be lengthened: sharpen my thought as 'twere a blade of iron.

vi. 47. 10.

Come willingly to our doors that gladly welcome thee, and heal all sickness, Rudra, in our families.

May thy bright arrow which, shot down by thee from heaven, flieth upon the earth, pass us uninjured by.

Thou, very gracious god, hast thousand medicines: inflict no evil on our sons or progeny.

vii. 46. 2-3.

Guard to old age, thy friend, O friend, eternal: O Agni, as immortal guard us mortals.

x. 87. 21.

vi. For sons

To invaders and colonists a goodly family of sons was the best of body-guards, and men who believed that it was by their pious offerings that the spirits of their forefathers, the *pitṛis*, prospered in the heavenly realms would most earnestly desire that they might themselves have sons to render to them the same services. There are, therefore, many petitions for children, especially for sons, in the hymns of the Rig-veda.

May we foster well, during a hundred winters, son and progeny.

i. 64. 14.

May the wealth-giver (Agni) grant us conquering riches; may the wealth-giver grant us wealth with heroes.

May the wealth-giver grant us food with offspring, and length of days may the wealth-giver send us.

i. 96. 8.

Help us to wealth exceeding good and glorious, abundant, rich in children and their progeny.

ii. 2. 12.

To us be born a son and spreading offspring, Agni, be this thy gracious will to us-ward.

iii. 6. 11.

Bṛihaspati, may we be lords of riches, with noble progeny and store of heroes.

iv. 50. 6.

May he, deft-handed Tvaṣṭar, give us hero sons.

vii. 34. 20.

vii. For forgiveness

So far these prayers are distinctly materialistic. The outlook of the worshipper is limited to the things of this life, and to a welfare relating to this life only. There is little of that fervent devotion that rings through the verses of the poets of the later sects whose religion from beginning to end is characterized by devotion (*bhakti*). In this sense the hymns of the Rig-veda do not reach the heart as do the poems of Tūkārām the Mahratta, or Paddaṇattu Piḷḷaiyār or Māṇikka Vāsaka the Tamils.

This is the impression generally left after the careful reading of Vedic hymns, and to this extent the Rig-veda

is a disappointment. There is little in it that speaks of the quest for purity. It is seldom, very seldom that the singers express penitence that is not merely a fear of punishment or longing after other than cattle and horses and long life. The prayer of the Hebrew psalmist 'Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me' appeals to every true seeker after God, but even in the most beautiful of the hymns to Varuṇa or the Ādityas there is scarcely more than an echo of it. To the early Aryan sin is error in conduct or worship which makes his god angry with his worshipper and therefore unwilling to protect or prosper him. The idea of sin as that which ought not to be in life or character, apart altogether from any question of prosperity, or as disobedience to the holy will of a holy god, has scarcely dawned on the Aryan's mind as seen in the hymns. If he wishes to be good, it is because he believes that he will then be prosperous. If he prays that his sins may be forgiven, it is because he fears the punishment of misdoing. He may call his gods holy, but the hymns about his gods show that he believed them to be capable of deeds contrary to the most elementary righteousness and purity. But though few there are some earnest prayers for spiritual health.

With bending down, oblations, sacrifices, O Varuṇa, we deprecate thine anger:

Wise immortal, thou king of wide dominion, loosen the bonds of sin by us committed.

Loosen the bonds, O Varuṇa, that hold me, loosen the bonds above, between, and under.

So in thy holy law may we made sinless belong to Aditi, O thou Āditya.

i. 24. 14-15.

Bring hither nourishment for us, ye Aśvins twain; sprinkle us with your whip that drops with honey-dew.

Prolong our days, wipe out our trespasses; destroy our foes, be our companions and our friends.

i. 157. 4.

Aditi, Mitra, Varuṇa, forgive us however we have erred and sinned against you.

May I obtain the broad light free from peril: O Indra, let not during darkness seize us.

ii. 27. 14.

Most youthful god (Agni) whatever sin, through folly, here in the world of men we have committed,

Before great Aditi make thou us sinless: remit entirely, Agni, our offences.

Even in the presence of great sin, O Agni, free us from prison of the gods or mortals.

Never may we who are thy friends be injured: grant health and wealth unto our seed and offspring.

iv. 12. 4-5.

If we have sinned against the man who loves us, have ever wronged a brother, friend, or comrade,

The neighbour ever with us, or a stranger, O Varuṇa, remove from us this trespass.

If we, as gamesters cheat at play, have cheated, done wrong unwittingly or sinned of purpose,

Cast all these sins away like loosened fetters, and, Varuṇa, let us be thine own beloved.

v. 85. 7-8.

Let us not suffer for the sins of others, nor do the deed which ye, O Vasus, punish.

Ye, universal gods, are all-controllers: may he do harm unto himself who hates me.

vi. 51. 7.

I call, as such, the sons of bounteous Rudra: will not the Maruts turn again to us-ward?

What secret sin or open stirs their anger, that we implore the swift ones to forgive us.

vii. 58. 5.

We crave the heavenly grace of gods to guard us—so may Bṛihaspati, O friends, exalt us—

That he the bounteous god may find us sinless, who giveth from a distance like a father.

vii. 97. 2.

Wise deities, who have dominion o'er the world, ye thinkers over all that moves not and that moves,

Save us from uncommitted and committed sin, preserve us from all sin to-day for happiness.

x. 63. 8.

Best worth notice of these prayers is a psalm to Varuṇa the eighty-sixth hymn in the seventh book of the Rig-veda. It ends with a petition for prosperity, but in spite of this it is one of the most beautiful, and perhaps the most spiritually minded utterance in the Rig-veda.

1. The tribes of men have wisdom through his greatness who stayed even spacious heaven and earth asunder;

Who urged the high and mighty sky to motion, and stars of old, and spread the earth before him.

2. With mine own heart I commune on the question how Varuṇa and I may be united.

What gift of mine will he accept unangered? When may I calmly look and find him gracious?

3. Fain to know this my sin I question others: I seek the wise, O Varuṇa, and ask them.

This one same answer even the sages gave me, Surely this Varuṇa is angry with thee.

4. What, Varuṇa, hath been my chief transgression, that thou shouldst slay the friend who sings thy praises?

Tell me, unconquerable lord, and quickly sinless will I approach thee with mine homage.

5. Loose us from sins committed by our fathers, from those wherein we have ourselves offended.

O king, loose, like a thief who feeds the cattle, as from the cord a calf, set free Vasiṣṭa.

6. Not our own will betrayed us, but seduction, thoughtlessness, Varuṇa! wine, dice, or anger.

The old is near to lead astray the younger; even slumber leadeth men to evil-doing.

7. Slavelike may I do service to the bounteous, serve, free from sin, the god inclined to anger.

This gentle lord gives wisdom to the simple; the wiser god leads on the wise to riches.

8. O lord, O Varuṇa, may this laudation come close to thee, and lie within thy spirit.

May it be well with us in rest and labour. Preserve us evermore, ye gods, with blessings.

vii. 86.

viii. For future life

Prayers for life in the world beyond are not unusual. They show that the Aryan sought a heaven of happiness and immortality with the gods that corresponding with Svarga, the heaven of delights, of later Hinduism.

The givers of rich meeds are made immortal; the givers of rich fees prolong their life time.

i. 125. 6.

May I attain to that his well loved mansion where men devoted to the gods are happy.

i. 154. 5.

We pray for rain, your boon (Mitra-Varuṇa) and immortality.

v. 63. 2.

We have drunk soma and became immortal; we have attained the light, the gods discovered.

viii. 48. 3.

High up in heaven abide the guerdon-givers; they who give steeds dwell with the Sun for ever.

They who give gold are blest with life eternal: they who give robes protect their lives, O Soma.

x. 107. 2.

In hymn 113 of Book IX of the Rig-veda, addressed to Soma Pavamāna, the joys of heaven are more fervently implored than in other parts of the Rig-veda and Soma is the god from whom the gift of future happiness is expected.

O Pavamāna, place me in that deathless, undecaying world.

Wherein the light of heaven is set, and everlasting lustre shines. Flow, Indu, flow for Indra's sake.

Make me immortal in that realm where dwells the king, Vivasvan's son (i.e. Yama).

Where is the secret shrine of heaven, where are those waters young and fresh. Flow, Indu, flow for Indra's sake.

Make me immortal in that realm where they move even as they list.

In the third sphere of inmost heaven where lucid worlds are full of light. Flow, Indu, flow for Indra's sake.

Make me immortal in that realm of eager wish and strong desire.

The region of the golden Sun, where food and full delight are found. Flow, Indu, flow for Indra's sake.

Make me immortal in that land where happiness and transports, where

Joys and felicities combine, and longing wishes are fulfilled. Flow, Indu, flow for Indra's sake.

ix. 113. 7-11.

VII. THE MESSAGE OF THE RIG-VEDA

THE student of the Rig-veda cannot remind himself too often of the composite character of the collection of hymns that it contains. Colebrooke's essay *On the Vedas* was published in 1805, more than a century ago, and Sanskrit scholars are still debating whether these hymns are the simple and direct utterances of the hopes and fears, the prayers and the fancies of the faith which the Aryan brought with him when he first entered India, or whether they give us his thought when he had reached a comparatively advanced stage of civilization after the sages of his race had long and carefully considered the world around them. The truth may lie between the two views. There are verses and hymns that most certainly belong to the religious childhood, the wonder-time, of the Aryan race. There are as certainly others that have been composed or revised so that they magnify the power of the priest, and emphasize the duty of the worshipper to support elaborate ceremonial and to heap liberal gifts on clamouring ministrants. These mark a late and often a corrupt period of the evolution of the Aryan's faith. A few hymns, such as the Puruṣa sūkta, Hymn 90 of Book X of the Rig-veda, are obviously the productions of a singer who inherited many questionings and

Composite nature of Rig.veda

speculations. If only it were possible to arrange the hymns in the order in which they were composed they would thus give materials for an outline of the growth of the religion of the Aryans from the days when they were still one race with the ancestors of the Persians down to the time when the Epic Age of their history in India was beginning. Because this cannot be done the reader is constantly harrassed by the impression that he is missing much of their significance.

If a guess may be hazarded, the hymns of the Rig-veda cover a period of seven hundred years, years in which many Aryan tribes journeyed far, conquering and colonizing the great stretch of country from the passes of Afghanistan to the Ganges. Those were years in which clans or families grew into nations, in which the Aryan faith was in close but not always hostile relation to the religion of the Dasyus, and in which it could not but be that there would be many marriages which would bring the beliefs of the Dasyus into the homesteads where Dyaus and Varuṇa and Agni were worshipped.

It was a long period of expeditions, warfare, adventure; then of adaptation to new conditions of climate, soil, seasons, and crops; while the civilization of the nomads beyond Afghanistan changed in different degrees in different districts to the settled national life described in the Mahābhārata.

There are reflections of all these varying conditions in the hymns, but owing to the confusion of more and less ancient hymns in the Rig-veda it is mere audacity, to attempt to separate and declare dogmatically precisely what acts of worship and what expressions of belief

made up the religion of Vedic times. It must be sufficient to indicate the chief elements of the religion in general terms, always with the understanding that the Aryans were many, that the centuries were long, and that what is true of one tribe or place or generation may not be true of all.

The various value of the hymns

Another word of caution must be entered. The hymns that have been referred to, and the hymns that will be found in the section of this book containing readings from the Vedas have, of course, been selected because they are full of meaning, such as the hymns to Varuṇa; or of beauty, such as the hymns to Ushas; or of quaint interest, such as that to the frogs. These hymns are typical of others equally valuable. But, as Max Müller did not hesitate to say, it must not be forgotten that though the historical interest of the Veda can hardly be exaggerated, large numbers of the Vedic hymns are childish in the extreme, tedious or common-place. Many of them convey no clear meaning, or are full of vain repetitions. It is not the rule but the exception to find in this great collection of literature any cry of the soul, any glimpse of a spiritual instinct, any grasp of high revelation.

No theology in the hymns

It is a curious fact, too, that in so great a collection of hymns there is so little attempt to weave the scattered religious instincts and aspirations of the time into a consistent whole; nor any evident effort after ordered religious conceptions of the universe, such as resulted, in the case of the Greeks—kinsmen of the Aryans, let us remember—in an idealized grouping of the gods on

Olympus, and in a love for beauty in things moral which led them far in the search for that form of religion which was truer and more perfect than the polytheism of Olympus. In spite of the many statements in the hymns of the Aryans sages as to the relations of the gods to each other, there is nothing but inconsistency in the genealogies of those gods, and a complete lack of agreement between the various assertions that are made about them. It is impossible to construct a theology out of the materials found in the Vedas.

It is almost equally true to say that though the Aryan had high esteem for many of the virtues, these Vedic poets and thinkers do not present to their hearers any complete moral ideal. This is all the more remarkable for the conditions were as favourable to the formation of high ethical and mystical ideals in those days as they ever have been in India.

(i) Socially the Aryans when they entered India were free from any caste system. Even the priests were not as yet a separate class. The barriers that forbade any but the priests to be learned had not been set up, and so far as can be seen now there was nothing to hinder prophet or law-giver from delivering such message as he had.

No caste

(ii) The simplicity and naturalness of the times is also evident from the part that women had in worship and sacrifice. The hymns, especially the marriage hymns and the funeral hymns, show not only that priesthood had not yet usurped the right to preside at religious ceremonies, but that woman helped in the worship, had ceased to be a child before she was married, received due honour in the house of

Women respected

her husband, and might even compose hymns that would be included in the Vedas. The position of the women of any race may be regarded as an index of the social advancement of that race, and by this criterion it is evident that the Aryans were not hampered by an unhealthy family system.

(iii) The mental outlook was clearer than it became during the period when the Brāhmaṇas were being composed. The Vedic worshipper does not deny his own personality or the personality of whatever gods he is worshipping. He speaks like a man who believes in the existence of his own *ego* and in the reality of the personality of the divine being whom he worships. The monism of the Upanishads which reduces the Supreme to a 'mere abyss of being' without qualities, which looks on all existence as illusion (*māyā*) and explains it as a merely phenomenal round of births (*samsāra*) determined by the inexorable necessity of consuming the fruits of deeds done in previous lives (*karma*) may find passages in the Rig-veda to which it can trace some of its doctrines. But, speaking generally, the Vedas show men who believe in the actual existence of living gods as much as they believe in the actuality of their own personal experience.

Personality believed in

(iv) Nor was there anything in the forms of worship practised by the early Aryans to prevent, if the term may be allowed, the possibility of the attainment of high spiritual vision. Their praise of the gods in its simpler forms is the spontaneous utterance of any man 'with opened eyes' to the marvels of the world around him. Their prayers for safety and health and long life and family welfare

Naturalness of Aryans

are the expressions of what could not but be the wishes of men in the early stages of national life. The offerings of soma-juice and grain, and the occasional solemn sacrificial feast of the worshipper with his god on some sacred animal are indications that they shared with many other primitive races the belief that these were the right and proper ways in which they might approach the gods. There is nothing in these things that would debar progress to a moral and spiritual ideal as high as that attained from much the same beginnings by the Hebrews.

If a summary of the position of those Vedic thinkers is attempted, the student will see that three very significant lines of thought find expression in the Vedas, all of them in hymns probably of the same periods. There is the belief in the righteousness of Varuṇa, the belief in the power of ceremonies, and the dawning acceptance of monism.

The study of the first of these gives ground for thinking that for a long time the Aryans were on the way to reach a high moral ideal.

I. Reverence for Varuna

Varuṇa was, as has already been pointed out, one of the very old gods of the Aryans, and it is Varuṇa who towers above all the rest in moral grandeur. 'It is possible to trace in the conception of this deity a movement of the minds of those ancient worshippers towards a theism of a wonderfully lofty character. . . . There is much in the prayers and hymns to Varuṇa that brings back to one who knows it the lofty language of Hebrew seers and Psalmists. . . . He is the great lord of the laws of nature, the upholder and controller of their order and their movement. . . . He is especially a moral

sovereign, and in his presence more than in that of any other Vedic god a sense of guilt awakens in his servants' hearts. His eyes behold and see the righteous and the wicked. Varuṇa's ordinances are fixed and sure, so that even the immortal gods cannot oppose them. He places his fetters upon the sinner; his is the power to bind and the power also to release, and he forgives sins even unto the second generation. . . . Perhaps the most significant fact of all in regard to this Vedic deity is the connexion of the doctrine of *ṛita* or the moral order with his name and authority.'[1]

This last point is worthy of special notice for *ṛita* is the highest conception of 'the whole duty of man' to be found in the Veda. It is the divine method and law, which should be paramount in the order of the universe, in the worship of the gods, and in the actions of men. It corresponds to the 'righteousness' of the Hebrews.

Mysticism and Ethics

Two elements are essential in all religion that is to raise men. There must first be a mystic relation between the worshipper and his god, which shall enable the worshipper to feel that he can communicate with and be inspired by his god. That mysticism is present in the hymns to Varuṇa. 'With mine own heart I commune on the question how Varuṇa and I may be united' confesses the singer.[2] Not less important for the moral growth of a man's soul is the positive conviction of the righteousness of his god and of the need for the worshipper to practise the same righteousness. Along

[1] Dr. N. Macnicol, on the *Theism of the Rig-veda* in the *Indian Interpreter*, April, 1909.

[2] *Rig-veda*, vii. 86. 2.

with mystical devotion there must go clear ethical perception. This is present in the hymns to Varuṇa as far as they refer to *ṛita*. If the hymns to Varuṇa were the only hymns that remained to us from Vedic times we should be justified in believing that the Aryans had almost reached the full belief in a supreme god, just and holy, whom they could and must serve with holiness and righteousness all their days.

But just as this belief begins to find expression Varuṇa seems to fade away. No hymn is addressed to him in the last book of the Rig-veda.

The passing of Varuna

The effort after righteousness ceases to be apparent if it continued to exist. Indra, a god far inferior in moral qualities becomes for the time chief of the Vedic gods, but supremacy is claimed for so many other gods that the mind of the thoughtful was impelled towards the pantheism or monism that at last has its most uncompromising expression in the non-ethical, non-moral speculations of the Vedanta.

There is a very remarkable hymn in the Rig-veda[1] in which this religious change or crisis is reflected in the words of an observant seer. In its verses Indra calls on Agni to awake from darkness. Agni comes telling Indra that for his sake he has forsaken Varuṇa. 'I bid farewell to the great god, the Father, ... I leave the Father for my choice is Indra.' And the seer adds 'Away pass Agni, Varuṇa and Soma. Kingship alternates: this (supremacy of Indra) I come to favour.'

That seer had at least grasped the fact, whether he

[1] *Rig-veda*, x. 124. Quoted in full in the Readings from the Veda.

understood the full significance of the situation or not. Later generations were not attracted by the severe personality and the moral uprightness of Varuṇa and did not return to him; and Varuṇa remains in later Hindu writings a dim god of seas and storms and tides.

Yet it would be a mistake to say that the other trends of thought triumphed over what was represented by the few hymns to Varuṇa, just as it would be a mistake to say that the monism of the Upanishads and of the Vedanta triumphed over the more ancient beliefs of the Aryans. The supreme vision of holiness was simply not attained.

It is difficult to discern how far the worship of the holy Varuṇa was general among the Vedic Aryans, and why it declined; but there can be no doubt as to the religious attitude of the ordinary worshipper. He requires attention because of the gift that he offers. '*Dehi me dadāmi te*, Give thou to me, I give to thee' is the formula. The gods receive strength from the offerings of the worshipper.

> As rivers swell the ocean, so, hero, our prayers increase thy might.
>
> viii. 87. 8.

In return the gods ought to render to the worshipper what he wants. One sage argues the matter with Agni without any reserve:

> Son of strength, Agni, if thou were the mortal, bright as Mitra, worshipped with our gifts,
> And I were the immortal god,
> I would not give thee up, Vasu, to calumny or sinfulness, O bounteous one.
> My worshipper should feel no hunger or distress nor, O Agni, should he live in sin.
>
> *Rig-veda*, viii. 19. 25, 26.

2. Efficiency of Ceremonialism

And not only ought the gods to answer prayer out of mercy and graciousness. The idea that a sacrifice rightly performed or a hymn duly sung will compel the gods to do what the worshipper wishes becomes very pronounced. The magic power of the spell, especially the spell that will set the gods to work against the demons comes out again and again. In one of the later verses of the Rig-veda, the sage Vāmadeva is represented as being able to hire out the services of Indra for ten cows to those who will return him :

> Who for ten milch-kine purchaseth from me this my Indra ?
> When he hath slain the Vṛitras let the buyer give him back to me.
>
> *Rig-veda*, iv. 24. 10.

The commentator Sāyaṇa says that Vāmadeva had by much praise got Indra into his possession or subjugation and so was able to propose this bargain. The notion does not seem to him anything extraordinary. It is the world-wide idea of the power of the spell. And so arises the belief, fatal to morality, that any worshipper who can secure the due performance of the offerings and incantations elaborated into the ritual of the horse-sacrifice in the Yajur-veda, for example, is master of the universe of gods and men.[1]

'Thus', says Macdonell, 'the statement occurs in the *White Yajur-veda* (circ 1000 B. C.) that the Brahman who possesses correct knowledge has the gods in his power. The Brāhmaṇas go a step farther in saying that there are two kinds of gods, the Devas and the Brahmans,

[1] HAUG, *Introduction to Aitareya Brahmana*, pp. 73–4.

the latter of whom are to be held as deities among men. In the Brāhmaṇas, too, the sacrifice is represented as all-powerful, controlling not only the gods, but the very processes of nature.'[1]

> Verily, there are two kinds of gods; for, indeed, the gods are the gods; and the Brahmans who have studied and teach sacred lore are the human gods.
>
> *Satapatha Brahmana*, II. ii. 2, 6.

The charms and magic formulae in the Atharva-veda are expressions of the same paralysing belief, but it is found in the period before the Atharva-veda also. From the earliest days there had always been present in the mind of the Aryan a firm belief in demons; and while the high aspirations of a few singers were fixed on Varuṇa, the many, especially as they came in contact with the Dravidians who seemed to worship the devils that the Aryans feared, were more and more inclined to forms of faith and worship which seemed to them to guarantee, protection and welfare that they longed for while conscious of the malice and power of the demon hosts. And this belief has persisted in the magic practices of the Dravidians of Malabar and in the black magic of the Tantras.

If modern processes of thought held good in the minds of the ancient Aryans there must always have been men among them who did not accept the established conceptions of those around them. There are Protestants in the most conservative communities and from the Puruṣa sūkta[2] it is certain that in later Vedic times there were those who had

3. Monistic ideas

[1] *Sanskrit Literature*, p. 73.

[2] *Rig-veda*, x. 90.

begun to give a monistic interpretation to the universe. The idea of the ancient human sacrifice supplies the almost repellent framework and the imagery of this hymn, and the attempts to link the older mythology to the more developed ideas is awkward, but the general conception of the One that is the All is definite in the poet's mind and is forcibly put. The full import can only be grasped if it is quoted in full.

1. A thousand heads had Puruṣa,[1] a thousand eyes, a thousand feet.

On every side pervading earth he fills a space ten fingers wide.[2]

2. This Puruṣa is all that yet hath been and all that is to be;

The lord of immortality which waxes greater still by food.

3. So mighty is his greatness; yea, greater than this is Puruṣa.

All creatures are one-fourth of him, three-fourths eternal life in heaven.

4. With three-fourths Puruṣa went up: one-fourth of him again was here.

Thence he strode out to every side over what eats not and what eats.

5. From him Virāj [3] was born; again Puruṣa from Virāj was born.

As soon as he was born he spread eastward and westward o'er the earth.

[1] Puruṣa represents Man personified and regarded as the soul and original source of the universe, the personal and life-giving principle in all animated things.—Griffith.

[2] The region of the heart of man.

[3] Virāj is said to have come, in the form of the mundane egg from Ādi-Puruṣa, the primeval Puruṣa. Or Virāj may be the female counterpart of Puruṣa.—Griffith.

6. When gods prepared the sacrifice with Puruṣa as their offering,

Its oil was spring, the holy gift was autumn; summer was the wood.

7. They balmed (or, immolated) as victim on the grass Puruṣa born in earliest time.

With him the deities and all Sādhyas[1] and Rishis sacrificed.

8. From that great general sacrifice the dripping fat[2] was gathered up.

He formed the creatures of the air, and animals both wild and tame.

9. From that great general sacrifice Ṛicas and Sāma-hymns were born:

Therefrom the metres were produced, the Yajus had its birth from it.

10. From it were horses born, from it all creatures with two rows of teeth:

From it were generated kine, from it the goats and sheep were born.

11. When they divided Puruṣa how many portions did they make?

What do they call his mouth, his arms? What do they call his thighs and feet?

12. The Brāhman was his mouth, of both his arms was the Rājanya made.

His thighs became the Vaisya, from his feet the Sudra was produced.

13. The Moon was gendered from his mind, and from his eye the Sun had birth;

Indra and Agni from his mouth were born, and Vāyu from his breath.

14. Forth from his navel came mid-air; the sky was fashioned from his head;

Earth from his feet, and from his ear the regions. Thus they formed the worlds.

[1] A class of celestial beings, probably ancient divine sacrificers.

[2] The mixture of curds and butter.

15. Seven fencing-logs[1] had he, thrice seven layers of fuel were prepared,
When the gods, offering sacrifice, bound, as their victim Puruṣa.
16. Gods, sacrificing, sacrificed the victim: these were the earliest holy ordinances,
The mighty ones attained the height of heaven, there were the Sādhyas, gods of old, are dwelling.

The same idea appears in the remarkable hymn in which Prajāpati is declared the lord and creator of all. This hymn also must be read as a whole.

1. In the beginning rose Hiraṇyagarbha,[2] born only lord of all created beings.
He fixed and holdeth up this earth and heaven. What god shall we adore with our oblation?[3]
2. Giver of vital breath, of power and vigour, he whose commandments all the gods acknowledge:
Whose shade is death, whose lustre makes immortal. What god shall we adore with our oblation?
3. Who by his grandeur hath become sole ruler of all the moving world that breathes and slumbers;
He who is lord of men and lord of cattle. What god shall we adore with our oblation?
4. His, through his might, are these snow-covered mountains, and men call sea and Rasa[4] his possession:
His arms are these, his thighs these heavenly regions. What god shall we adore with our oblations?

[1] Pieces of wood laid round a sacrificial fire to keep it together

[2] The gold germ, the Sun-god, as the great power of the universe.

[3] Also translated 'worship we Ka the god with our oblation.' [Ka, meaning Who? that is, the unknown god, has been applied as a name to Prajāpati, and to other gods, from a forced interpretation of the interrogative pronoun which occurs in the refrain of each verse of the hymn. See p. 92.]

[4] The mythical river of the sky.

5. By him the heavens are strong and earth is steadfast, by him light's realm and sky-vault are supported:

By him the regions in mid-air were measured. What god shall we adore with our oblations?

6. To him, supported by his help, two armies enbattled look while trembling in their spirit,

When over them the risen sun is shining. What god shall we adore with our oblation?

7. What time the mighty waters came, containing the universal germ, producing Agni,

Thence sprang the gods' one spirit into being. What god shall we adore with our oblation?

8. He in his might surveyed the floods containing productive force and generating Worship (or, giving birth to sacrifice).

He is the god of gods, and none beside him. What god shall we adore with our oblation?

9. Ne'er may he harm us who is earth's begetter, nor he whose laws are sure, the heaven's creator,

He who brought forth the great and lucid waters. What god shall we adore with our oblation?

10. Prajāpati! thou only comprehendest all these created things, and none beside thee.

Grant us our hearts' desire when we invoke thee: may we have store of riches in possession.

Hymn to Ka. Rig-veda, x. 121.

If this hymn is an uncertain rather than a reasoned presentation of monism, it at any rate contains foundation enough to justify later Vedantism in attempting to read its own teaching into the Vedas.

The legacy of the Aryan religion

From all that has been said it will be clear that the religion of the Vedas, like every other living religion, contained various and even contrary modes of thought and expression, and represented the worship of more than one type

of believer. And just as it is not easy to define the precise contents of these various types of faith, so it is not less difficult to state exactly what legacy the religion of the Aryans bequeathed to the later ceremonial religion that flourished in India before Buddhism arose. But the present study indicates the following as the main results which the religion of Vedic times transmitted to the succeeding ages.

(i) Hinduism received from Vedic times a pantheon of gods and goddesses, of very various and sometimes of very doubtful moral character, generally benevolent, but not always so; and generally apparently regardless of the moral conduct of those who worshipped them, provided the worship was duly rendered. In this is the beginning of the vast, confused, anthropomorphic and sometimes utterly vile mythology of some of the Puranas.

(ii) Hinduism also inherited a profoundly rooted belief in demons which opened the way to the appropriation of much of the demon worship of the aboriginal races in India by the Aryans, and later on to the incorporation of some of it in recognized Hinduism, especially in Saivism.

(iii) The doctrine of the power of the rightly performed sacrifice and the rightly sung hymn to produce and direct and control the might of the gods, as found in the Vedas, contains the beginnings of a sacerdotalism that grew in proportion as the Brahmans became a distinct priestly class among their fellow Aryans. In its extreme forms it is a doctrine which sanctions all manner of magic, and as it makes the rite supreme it is fatal to morality. Tantric Hinduism is directly derives its power from this doctrine.

(iv) The inclusion in the Veda of the Puruṣa sūkta which expressly states that the Priest, the Warrior, the Merchant and the Serf were the four orders of men created by divine power is a sign that along with the rise of the Brahman priesthood, there was also arising a distinction of classes in the population which later on became the caste system of Hinduism.

(v) There was also in that Puruṣa sūkta and in certain other hymns evidence of the beginning of the later monistic Vedantism.

(vi) Beyond all else in real religious value the Aryans handed on to their descendants the thought that the worshipper and his god might be friends, and that the worshipper might love and trust his god. The numbing fatalism of the doctrine of rebirths (*samsāra*) is absent from the Vedas. The Aryan worshipped without images and his house was his temple. In his ignorance he often worshipped wrongly, and men cannot begin again to worship his gods or offer his prayers and sacrifices. But though the gods and the worship of the ancient Aryan are faded names and forgotten rites, he had the spirit of devotion. Later Hinduism, especially philosophic Hinduism has again and again made light of this truth. The 'Way of Wisdom' (*jñāna mārga*) has been exalted above the 'Way of Devotion' or 'Way of Love' (*bhakti mārga*). But it is along the 'Way of Love' that those who have come nearest to God have walked in India as in all the world, and that 'Way of Love' had its beginnings in the devotion of the Vedic sage to Varuṇa or Agni.

Tulsi Dās and Tukā Rāma, Paddanattu Pillai and Mānikka Vāsakar all walked in that 'Way of Love'

and it has brought millions to the feet of Rama and Krishna and Śiva and the Buddha.

India is more conscious of the open 'Way of Love' to-day than her Aryan ancestors were and more anxious to enter it. Dyaus and Varuṇa have been loved and have passed away. Krishna and Rama and Siva Nadarāja won the strong devotion of succeeding generations. Like their ancestors the simpler villagers and the unlearned still delight in the stories of the heroic deeds or 'holy sport' of the gods of the epics and the Puranas. But the more deeply devout of their worshippers to-day are striving to love a Krishna or a Siva allegorized and transformed by an awakened moral sense. The attempt is being repeatedly made to find Christ in Krishna. Such efforts must fail. But they show a true instinct. And it cannot but be that as the years roll on India will find that she best comes to knowledge of the All-Father in the divine and holy graciousness of the eternal personality of Jesus of Galilee, and that without hesitation or misgiving or thought of other hostile powers, whether Devas or demons, she can set the loving devotion of her longing heart on Him and find content.

READINGS

FROM THE

VEDA

These readings are arranged according to the deities to which they are addressed, or the special subjects to which they refer. A few explanations of proper names and allusions are given in footnotes.

The translations used are those by the late R. T. H. Griffith, published by Messrs. Lazarus & Co., Benares, but the transliteration of the proper names is that followed in the earlier parts of this book.

THE RIG-VEDA

Book ii. Hymn 27. THE ĀDITYAS

1. These hymns that drop down fatness, with the ladle I ever offer to the kings Ādityas.

May Mitra, Aryaman and Bhaga hear us, the mighty Varuṇa, Daksha and Aṇśa.

2. With one accord may Aryaman and Mitra and Varuṇa this day accept this praise-song—

Ādityas bright and pure as streams of water, free from all guile and falsehood, blameless, perfect.

3. These gods, Ādityas, vast profound and faithful, with many eyes, fain to deceive the wicked,

Looking within behold the good and the evil: near to the kings is even the thing most distant.

4. Upholding that which moves and that which moves not, Ādityas, gods, protectors of all being,

Provident, guarding well the world of spirits, true to eternal law, the debt-exactors.

5. May I, Ādityas, share in this your favour which Aryaman, brings profit e'en in danger.

Under your guidance, Varuṇa and Mitra, round troubles may I pass, like rugged places.

6. Smooth is your path, O Aryaman and Mitra; excellent is it Varuṇa, and thornless.

Thereon, Ādityas, send us down your blessing: grant us a shelter hard to be demolished.

7. Mother of kings, may Aditi transport us, by fair paths, Aryaman, beyond all hatred.

May we uninjured, girt by many heroes, win Varuṇa's and Mitra's high protection.

8. With their support they stay three earths, three heavens; three are their functions in the gods' assembly.

Mighty through Law, Ādityas, is your greatness; fair is it, Aryaman, Varuṇa and Mitra.

9. Golden and splendid, pure like streams of water, they hold aloft the three bright heavenly regions.

Ne'er do they slumber, never close their eyelids, faithful, far-ruling for the righteous mortal.

10. Thou over all, O Varuṇa, art sovran, be they gods, Asura, or be they mortals.

Grant unto us to see an hundred autumns: ours be the happy lives of our forefathers.

11. Neither the right nor left do I distinguish, neither the east nor yet the west, Ādityas.

Simple and guided by your wisdom, Vasus, may I attain the light that brings no danger.

12. He who bears gifts unto the kings, true leaders, he whom their everlasting blessings prosper,

Moves with his chariot first in rank and wealthy, munificent and lauded in assemblies.

13. Pure, faithful, very strong, with heroes round him, he dwells beside the waters rich with pasture.

None slays from near at hand or from a distance him who is under the Ādityas guidance.

14. Aditi, Mitra, Varuṇa, forgive us however we have erred and sinned against you.

May I obtain the broad light free from peril: O Indra, let not during darkness seize us.

15. For him the twain (*i.e.* heaven and earth) united pour their fulness, the rain from heaven: he thrives most highly favoured.

He goes to war mastering both the mansions: to him both portions of the world are gracious.

16. Your guiles, ye holy ones, to quell oppressors, your spread out against the foe, Ādityas,

May I car-borne pass like a skilful horseman: uninjured may I dwell in spacious shelter.

17. May I not live, O Varuṇa, to witness my wealthy, liberal, dear friend's destitution.
King, may I never lack well-ordered riches. Loud may we speak, with heroes, in assembly.

Book i. Hymn 1. AGNI

1. I laud Agni, the great high priest, god, minister of sacrifice,
The herald, lavishest of wealth.

2. Worthy is Agni to be praised by living as by ancient seers:
He shall bring hitherward the gods.

3. Through Agni man obtaineth wealth, yea, plenty waxing day by day,
Most rich in heroes, glorious.

4. Agni, the flawless sacrifice, which thou encompassest about
Verily goeth to the gods.

5. May Agni, sapient-minded priest, truthful, most gloriously great,
The god, come hither with the gods.

6. Whatever blessing, Agni, thou wilt grant unto thy worshipper,
That, Angiras,[1] is thy true gift.

7. To thee, dispeller of the night, O Agni, day by day with prayer,
Bringing thee reverence, we come;

8. Ruler of sacrifices, guard of Law (*ṛita*) eternal, radiant one,
Increasing in thine own abode.

9. Be to us easy of approach, even as a father to his son:
Agni, be with us for our weal.

[1] A name of Agni.

Book i. Hymn 26. AGNI, THE PRIEST AMONG THE GODS

[Fire is one of the early Aryan gods. When it become customary to offer sacrifice to the gods by fire, the fire-god was recognized by the Indo-Aryans as the messenger of the sacrifice, the great Priest.]

1. O worthy of oblation, Lord of prospering powers, assume thy robes,
 And offer this our sacrifice.
2. Sit, ever to be chosen, as our Priest, most youthful, through our hymns,
 O Agni, through our heavenly word.
3. For here a father for his son, kinsman for kinsman worshippeth,
 And friend, choice-worthy, for his friend.
4. Here let the foe-destroyers sit, Varuṇa, Mitra, Aryaman,
 Like men, upon our sacred grass.
5. O ancient Herald, be thou glad in this our rite and fellowship;
 Hearken thou well to these our songs.
6. Whate'er in this perpetual course we sacrifice to god and god,
 That gift is offered up in thee.
7. May he be our dear household Lord, Priest, pleasant and choice-worthy; may
 We, with bright fires, be dear to him.
8. The gods, adored with brilliant fires, have granted precious wealth to us;
 So, with bright fires, we pray to thee.
9. And, O Immortal One, so may the eulogies of mortal men
 Belong to us and thee alike.
10. With all thy fires, O Agni, find pleasure in this our sacrifice,
 And this our speech, O son of strength.

Book iv. Hymn 12. AGNI

[This is one of the few hymns addressed to Agni in which sin is prominently mentioned. But the invariable reference to wealth is also introduced.]

1. Whoso enkindles thee, with lifted ladle, and thrice this day offers thee food, O Agni,
May he excel, triumphant, through thy splendours, wise through thy mental power, O Jātavedas.[1]

2. Whoso, with toil and trouble, brings thee fuel, serving the majesty of mighty Agni,
He kindling thee at evening and at morning, prospers, and comes to wealth, and slays his foemen.

3. Agni is master of sublime dominion, Agni is lord of strength and lofty riches.
Straightway the self-reliant, god, most youthful, gives treasures to the mortal who adores him.

4. Most youthful god, whatever sin, through folly, here in the world of men we have committed,
Before great Aditi make thou us sinless: remit entirely, Agni, our offences.

5. Even in the presence of great sin, O Agni, free us from prison of the gods or mortals.
Never may we who are thy friends be injured: grant health and wealth unto our seed and offspring.

6. Even as ye here, gods excellent and holy, have loosed the cow that by the foot was tethered,[2]
So also set us free from this affliction: long let our life, O Agni, be extended.

Book v. Hymn 26. AGNI

[Agni is specially addressed as the inviter of the gods to sacrifices.]

1. O Agni, holy and divine, with splendour and thy pleasant tongue
Bring hither and adore the gods.

[1] Agni as knowing and possessing all creation.

[2] The cow-buffalo tied to a post during the sacrifice, symbolic of man bound by sin.

2. We pray thee, thou who droppest oil, bright-rayed! who lookest on the Sun,
Bring the gods hither to the feast.
3. We have enkindled thee, O sage, bright caller of the gods to feast,
O Agni, great in sacrifice.
4. O Agni, come with all the gods, come to our sacrificial gift:
We choose thee as invoking priest.
5. Bring, Agni, to the worshipper who pours the juice heroic strength:
Sit with the gods upon the grass.
6. Victor of thousands, Agni, thou, enkindled, cherishest the laws,
Laud-worthy, envoy of the gods.
7. Sit Agni Jātavedas down, the bearer of our sacred gifts,
Most youthful, god and minister.
8. Duly proceed our sacrifice, comprising all the gods, to-day:
Strew holy grass to be their seat.
9. So may the Maruts sit theron, the Aśvins, Mitra, Varuṇa:
The gods with all their company.

Book x. Hymn 39. Aśvins

[The author of this hymn is Ghoshā, daughter of Kakshīvān. Being a leper, she was incapable of marriage. When she was grown old in her father's house, the Aśvins gave her health, youth, and beauty, so that she obtained a husband. Only the opening verses are quoted.]

1. As 'twere the name of father, easy to invoke, we all assembled here invoke this car of yours,
Aśvins, your swiftly-rolling circumambient car which he who worships must invoke at eve and dawn.
2. Awake all present strains, and let the hymns flow forth: raise up abundant fulness: this is our desire.

Aśvins, bestow on us a glorious heritage and give our princes treasure fair as Soma is.

3. Ye are the bliss of her who groweth old at home, and helpers of the slow although he linger last.

Man call you too, Nāsatyas,[1] healers of the blind, the thin and feeble, and the man with broken bones.

4. Ye made Chyavāna, weak and worn with length of days, young again, like a car, that he had power to move.

Ye lifted up the son of Tugra from the floods. At our libations must all these your acts be praised.

5. We will declare among the folk your ancient deeds heroic; yea ye were physicians bringing health.

You, you who must be lauded, will we bring for aid, so that this foe of ours, O Aśvins, may believe.

6. Listen to me, O Aśvins; I have cried to you. Give me your aid as sire and mother help their son.

Poor, without kin or friend or ties of blood am I. Save me, before it be too late, from this my curse (i.e. my leprosy).

Book vii. Hymn 53. Dyaus and Prithivi

1. As priest with solemn rites and adorations I worship Heaven and Earth, the high and holy.

To them, great parents of the gods, have sages of ancient time, singing, assigned precedence.

2. With newest hymns set in the seat of Order those the two parents, born before all others,

Come, Heaven and Earth, with the celestial people, hither to us, for strong is your protection.

3. Yea, Heaven and Earth, ye hold in your possession full many a treasure for the liberal giver.

Grant us the wealth which comes in free abundance. Preserve us evermore, ye gods, with blessings.

[1] The Truthful.

Book i. Hymn 103. INDRA

1. That highest Indra-power of thine is distant; that which is here sages possessed aforetime.

This one is on the earth, in haven the other, and both unite as flag and flag in battle.

2. He spread the wide earth out and firmly fixed it, smote with his thunderbolt and loosed the waters.

Maghavan with his puissance struck down Ahi[1], rent Rauhiṇa[2] to death, and slaughteredVyansa.

3. Armed with his bolt and trusting in this prowess he wandered shattering the Dāsas' cities.[3]

Cast thy dart, knowing, thunderer, at the Dasyu; increase the Ārya's might and glory, Indra.

4. For him who thus hath taught these human races, Maghavan, bearing a fame-worthy title,

Thunderer, drawing nigh to slay the Dasyus, hath given himself the name of son for glory.

5. See this abundant wealth that he possesses, and put your trust in Indra's hero vigour.

He found the cattle, and he found the horses, he found the plants, the forests, and the waters.

6. To him the truly strong, whose deeds are many, to him the strong bull let us pour the soma.

The hero watching like a thief in ambush goes parting the possessions of the godless.

7. Well didst thou do that hero deed, O Indra, in waking with thy bolt the slumbering Ahi.

In thee, delighted dames divine rejoiced them, the flying Maruts and all gods were joyful.

8. As thou hast smitten Śuṣṇa, Pipru, Vṛitra and Kuyava, and Śambara's[4] forts, O Indra.

This prayer of ours may Varuṇa grant, and Mitra, and Aditi and Sindhu, Earth and Heaven.

[1] Ahi is a serpent demon, or another name for Vṛitra.

[2] Said to be a demon of drought: a dark cloud that withholds the rain.

[3] The forts of the Dasyus, the aborigines.

[4] Demons of drought.

Book i. Hymn 175. INDRA

[The following hymn to Indra, asking him to destroy the Dasyus, the aborigines, and give food and a camp with running water, bears internal evidence that it was composed at a time when the Aryans were invading India.]

1. Glad thee: thy glory hath been quaffed, lord of bay steeds, as 'twere the bowl's enlivening mead.
For thee the strong there is strong drink, mighty, with countless powers to win.

2. Let our strong drink, most excellent, exhilarating, come to thee,
Victorious, Indra! bringing gain, immortal, conquering in fight.

3. Thou, hero, winner of the spoil, urgest to speed the car of man.
Burn, like a vessel with the flame, the lawless Dasyu, conqueror!

4. Empowered by thine own might, O sage, thou stolest Sūrya's chariot wheel.
Thou bearest Kutsa with the steeds of Wind to Śuṣṇa as his death.[1]

5. Most mighty is thy rapturous joy, most splendid is thine active power,
Wherewith, foe-slaying, sending bliss, thou art supreme in gaining steeds.

6. As thou, O Indra, to the ancient singers wast ever joy, as water to the thirsty,
So unto thee I sing this invocation. May we find food, a camp with running water.

[1] Indra is said to have taken the wheel of Sūrya's chariot to throw against the demon of drought. Kutsa was a sage defended by Indra against Śuṣṇa, a demon of drought.

Book ii. Hymn 42. INDRA IN THE FORM OF A KAPINJALA [1]

1. Telling his race aloud with cries repeated, he (Kapinjala) sends his voice out as his boat a steerman.

O bird, be ominous of happy fortune: from no side may calamity befall thee.

2. Let not the falcon kill thee, nor the eagle; let not the arrow-bearing archer reach thee.

Still crying in the region of the Fathers,[2] speak here auspicious, bearing joyful tidings.

3. Bringing good tidings, bird of happy omen, call thou out loudly southward of our dwellings,[3]

So that no thief, no sinner may oppress us. Loud may we speak, with heroes, in assembly.

Book iii. Hymn 48. INDRA

1. Soon as the young Bull (Indra) sprang into existence he longed to taste the pressed-out soma's liquor.

Drink thou thy fill, according to thy longing, first, of the noble mixture blent with soma.

2. That day when thou wast born thou, fain to taste it, drankest the plant's milk which the mountains nourish.

That milk thy mother[4] first, the dame who bare thee poured for thee in thy mighty father's dwelling.

3. Desiring food he came unto his mother, and on her breast beheld the pungent soma.

Wise, he moved on, keeping aloof the others, and wrought great exploits in his varied aspects.

[1] The bird called the francoline partridge.

[2] The region where the spirits of departed ancestors dwell.

[3] The Fathers dwell towards the south. The cry of birds from that quarter was a good omen.

[4] Aditi.

4. Fierce, quickly conquering, of surpassing vigour, he framed his body even as he listed.

E'en from his birth-time Indra conquered Tvaṣṭṛi, bore off the soma and in beakers drank it.

5. Call we on Maghavan (i.e. the liberal one), auspicious Indra, best hero in the fight where spoil is gathered;

The strong, who listens, who gives aid in battles, who slays the Vṛitras, wins and gathers riches.

Book iii. Hymn 62. INDRA AND OTHERS

[The tenth verse of this hymn is the Gāyatrī or Sāvitrī.]

1. Your well-known prompt activities aforetime needed no impulse from your faithful servant.

Where, Indra, Varuṇa, is now that glory wherewith ye brought support to those who loved you?

2. This man, most diligent, seeking after riches, incessantly invokes you for your favour.

Accordant, Indra. Varuṇa, with the Maruts, with Heaven and Earth, hear ye mine invocation.

3. O Indra, Varuṇa, ours be this treasure, ours be wealth, Maruts, with full store of heroes.

May the Varūtrīs[1] with their shelter aid us, and Bhāratī[2] and Hotrā with the mornings.

4. Be pleased with our oblations thou loved of all gods, Bṛihaspati:[3]

Give wealth to him who brings thee gifts.

5. At sacrifices, with your hymns worship the pure Bṛihaspati—

I pray for power which none may bend—

6. The Bull of men, whom none deceive, the wearer of each shape at will,

Bṛihaspati most excellent.

[1] Varūtrīs, guardian goddesses or wives of the gods.

[2] Bhārati and Hōtra were goddesses presiding over worship.

[3] Lord of Prayer.

7. Divine, resplendent Pūshan, this our newest hymn of eulogy
By us is chanted forth to thee.
8. Accept with favour this my song, be gracious to the earnest thought,
Even as a bridegroom to his bride.
9. May he who sees all living thing, sees them together at a glance,—
May he, may Pūshan be our help.
10. May we attain that excellent glory of Savitar the god:
So may he stimulate our prayers.[1]
11. With understanding, earnestly, of Savitar the god we crave,
Our portion of prosperity.
12. Men, singers worship Savitar the god with hymn and holy rites,
Urged by the impulse of their thoughts.
13. Soma who gives success goes forth, goes to the gathering-place of gods.
To seat him at the seat of Law.
14. To us and to our cattle may Soma give salutary food,
To biped and to quadruped.
15. May Soma, strengthening our power of life, and conquering our foes,
In our assembly take his seat.
16. May Mitra, Varuṇa, sapient pair, bedew our pasturage with oil,
With meath the regions of the air.
17. Far-ruling joyful when adored, ye reign through majesty of might,
With pure laws everlastingly.
18. Lauded by Jamadagni's[2] song sit in the place of holy Law:[3]
Drink Soma, ye who strengthen Law.

[1] Tat savitur vareṇyam bhargo devasya dhīmahi.
Dhiyo yo naḥ prachodayāt.
[2] The kindler of the Fire.' [3] The place ordained for sacrifice.

Book v. Hymn 57. THE MARUTS

1. Of one accord, with Indra, O ye Rudras, come borne on your golden car for our prosperity.

An offering from us, this hymn is brought to you, as, unto one who thirsts for water, heavenly springs.

2. Armed with your daggers, full of wisdom, armed with spears, armed with your quivers, armed with arrows, with good bows,

Good horses and good cars have ye, O Pṛiśni's sons: ye, Maruts, with good weapons go to victory.

3. From hills and heaven ye shake wealth for the worshipper: in terror at your coming low the woods bow down.

Ye make the earth to tremble, sons of Pṛiśni, when for victory ye have yoked, fierce ones! your spotted deer,

4. Impetuous as the wind, wrapped in their robes of rain, like twins of noble aspect and of lovely form,

The Maruts, spotless, with steeds tawny-hued and red, strong in their mightiness and spreading wide like heaven.

5. Rich in adornment, rich in drops, munificent, bright in their aspect, yielding bounties that endure.

Noble by birth, adorned with gold upon their breasts, the singers of the sky have won immortal fame.

6. Borne on both shoulders, O ye Maruts, are your spears: within your arms is laid your energy and strength.

Your manliness on your heads, your weapons in your cars, all glorious majesty is moulded on your forms.

7. Vouchsafe to us, O Maruts, splendid bounty in cattle and in steeds, in cars and heroes.

Children of Rudra, give us high distinction: may I enjoy your godlike help and favour,

8. Ho! Maruts, heroes, skilled in Law, immortal, be gracious unto us, ye rich in treasures,

Ye hearers of the truth, ye sage and youthful, mightily waxing with loud-resonant voices.

Book v. Hymn 83. PARJANYA

1. Sing with these songs thy welcome to the mighty, with adoration praise and call Parjanya.

The Bull, loud roaring, swift to send his bounty, lays in the plants the seed for germination.

2. He smites the trees apart, he slays the demons: all life fears him who wields the mighty weapon.

From him exceeding strong flees e'en the guiltless when thundering Parjanya smites the wicked.

3. Like a car-driver whipping on his horses, he makes the messengers of rain spring forward.

Far off resounds the roaring of the lion what time Parjanya fills the sky with rain-cloud.

4. Forth burst the winds, down come the lightning-flashes; the plants shoot up, the realm of light is streaming.

Food springs abundant for all living creatures what time Parjanya quickens earth with moisture.

5. Thou at whose bidding earth bows low before thee, at whose command hoofed cattle fly in terror,

At whose behest the plants assume all colours, even thou Parjanya, yield us great protection.

6. Send down for us the rain of heaven, ye Maruts, and let the stallion's streams descend in torrents.

Come hither with this thunder while thou pourest the waters down, our heavenly lord and father.

7. Thunder and roar: the germ of life deposit. Fly round us on thy chariot water-laden.

Thine opened water-skin draw with thee downward, and let the hollows and the heights be level.

8. Lift up the mighty vessel, pour down water, and let the liberated streams rush forward.

Saturate both the earth and heaven with fatness, and for the cows let there be drink abundant.

9. When thou, with thunder and with roar, Parjanya, smitest sinners down,

This universe exults thereat, yea, all that is upon the earth.

10. Thou hast poured down the rain-flood: now withhold it. Thou hast made desert places fit for travel.

Thou hast made herbs to grow for our enjoyment: yea, thou hast won thee praise from living creatures.

Book i. Hymn 42. PUSHAN

1. Shorten our ways, O Pūshan, move aside obstruction in the path:

Go close before us, cloudborn god.

2. Drive, Pūshan, from our road the wolf, the wicked inauspicious wolf,[1]

Who lies in wait to injure us.

3. Who lurks about the path we take, the robber with a guileful heart:

Far from the road chase him away.

4. Tread with thy foot and trample out the firebrand of the wicked one,

The double-tongued, whoe'er he be.

5. Wise Pūshan, wonder-worker, we claim of thee now the aid wherewith

Thou furtheredst our sires of old.

6. So, lord of all prosperity, best wielder of the golden sword,

Make riches easy to be won.

[1] The word signifies also a wicked, godles man.

7. Past all pursuers lead us, make pleasant our path and fair to tread:
O Pūshan, find thou power for this.
8. Lead us to meadows rich in grass: send on our way no early heat:
O Pūshan, find thou power for this,
9. Be gracious to us, fill us full, give, feed us, and invigorate:
O Pūshan, find thou power for this.
10. No blame have we for Pūshan; him we magnify with songs of praise:
We seek the mighty one for wealth.

Book i. Hymn 20. ṚIBHUS

1. For the celestial race this song of praise which gives wealth lavishly
Was made by singers with their lips.
2. They who for Indra, with their mind, formed horses harnessed by a word,
Attained by works to sacrifice.
3. They for the two Nāsatyas [1] wrought a light car moving every way:
They formed a nectar-yielding cow.
4. The Ṛibhus with effectual prayers, honest, with constant labour made
Their sire and mother young again.
5. Together came your gladdening drops with Indra by the Maruts girt,
With the Ādityas, with the kings.
6. The sacrificial ladle, wrought newly by the god Tvashtar's hand—
Four ladles have ye made thereof.
7. Vouchsafe us wealth, to him who pours thrice seven libations, yea, to each
Give wealth, pleased with our eulogies.

[1] The Aśvins, the truthful ones.

8. As ministering priests they held, by pious acts they won themselves,
A share in sacrifice with gods.

Book vii. Hymn 46. RUDRA

1. To Rudra bring these songs, whose bow is firm and strong, the god of heavenly nature, with swift-flying shafts.
Disposer, conqueror whom none may overcome, armed with sharp-pointed weapons: may he hear our call.
2. He through his lordship thinks on beings of the earth on heavenly beings through his high imperial sway.
Come willingly to our doors that gladly welcome thee and heal all sickness, Rudra, in our families.
3. May thy bright arrow which, shot down by thee from heaven, flieth upon the earth, pass us uninjured by.
Thou, very gracious god, hast thousand medicines: inflict no evil on our sons or progeny.
4. Slay us not, nor abandon us, O Rudra: let not thy noose, when thou art angry, seize us.
Give us trimmed grass[1] and rule over the living. Preserve us evermore, ye gods, with blessings.

Book vii. Hymn 45. SAVITAR

1. May the god Savitar, rich in goodly treasures, filling the region, borne by steeds come hither,
In his hand holding much that makes people happy, lulling to slumber and arousing creatures.

[1] Sacred grass placed at the sacrifice for the gods to rest on. The petition means 'Permit us to continue to sacrifice,' i. e. Let us remain alive.

2. Golden, sublime, and easy in their motion, his arms extend unto the bounds of heaven.

Now shall that mightiness of his be lauded: even Sūra[1] yields to him in active vigour.

3. May this god Savitar, the strong and mighty, the lord of precious wealth, vouchsafe us treasures.

May he, advancing his far-spreading lustre, bestow on us the food that feedeth mortals.

4. These songs praise Savitar whose tongue is pleasant, praise him whose arms are full, whose hands are lovely.

High vital strength, and manifold, may ye grant us. Preserve us evermore, ye gods, with blessings.

Book ix. Hymn 1. Soma Pavamana[2]

1. In sweetest and most gladdening stream flow pure, O Soma, on thy way,

Pressed out for Indra, for his drink.

2. Fiend-queller, friend of all men, he hath with the plank[3] attained unto

His place, his iron-fashioned home.

3. Be thou best Vṛitra-slayer, best granter of bliss, most liberal:

Promote our wealthy princes' gifts.

4. Flow onward with thy juice unto the banquet of the mighty gods:

Flow hither for our strength and fame.

[1] A different form of the Sun-god. Sāyaṇa says that Savitar is the sun before it rises.

[2] The attributes of Agni are transferred to Soma. He is addressed as Pavamāna, representing the juice as it flows through the wool which is used as a strainer, and thus undergoing purification. The hymns were intended to be sung while this process was going on.

[3] Used in pressing soma-juice from the soma-plant.

5. O Indu,[1] we draw nigh to thee, with this one object day by day:
To thee alone our prayers are said.
6. The daughter of the Sun[2] by means of this eternal fleece makes pure
Thy Soma that is gushing forth,
7. Ten sister maids[3] of slender form seize him amid the press and hold
Him firmly on the final day.
8. The virgins[4] send him forth: they blow the skin[5] musician-like, and fuse.
The triple foe-repelling meath.
9. The inviolable milch-kine round about him blend, for Indra's drink,
The fresh young Soma with their milk.
10. In the wild raptures of this draught, Indra slays all the Vṛitras: he,
The hero pours his wealth on us.

Book ix. Hymn 112. Soma Pavamana

[This hymn appears to be an old popular song transformed into an address to Soma. The reference to the Brahman in the first verse proves that the priesthood already formed a profession when this hymn was finally composed.]

1. We all have various thoughts and plans, and diverse are the ways of men.
The priest (Brahman) seeks one who pours the juice,[6] wright[7] seeks the cracked, and leech the maimed. Flow, Indu, flow for Indra's sake.
2. The smith with ripe and seasoned plants,[8] with feathers of the birds of air,

[1] Soma falling from the strainer in drops.
[2] Śraddhā or Faith personified.
[3] The priest's fingers.
[4] The fingers.
[5] Some sort of bag-pipe.
[6] Who offers libations.
[7] Carpenter.
[8] Reeds to be made into arrows.

With stones and with enkindled flames, seeks him who hath a store of gold. Flow, Indu, flow for Indra's sake.

3. A bard am I, my dad's[1] a leech; mammy[2] lays corn upon the stones.

Striving for wealth, with varied plans, we follow our desires like kine. Flow, Indu, flow for Indra's sake.

4. The horse would draw an easy car; gay hosts attract the laugh and jest.

The male desires his mate's approach; the frog is eager for the flood. Flow, Indu, flow for Indra's sake.

Book i. Hymn 115. SURYA

1. The brilliant presence of the gods hath risen, the eye of Mitra, Varuṇa, and Agni.

The soul of all that moveth not or moveth, the Sun hath filled the air and earth and heaven.

2. Like as a young man followeth a maiden, so doth the Sun the Dawn, refulgent goddess:

When pious men extend their generations, before the auspicious one for happy fortune.

3. Auspicious are the Sun's bay-coloured horses, bright, changing hues, meet for our shouts of triumph.

Bearing our prayers, the sky's ridge have they mounted, and in a moment speed round earth and heaven.

4. This is the godhead, this the might of Sūrya; he hath withdrawn what spread o'er work unfinished.

When he hath loosed his horses from their station, straight over all Night spreadeth out her garment.

5. In the sky's lap the Sun this form assumeth for Mitra and for Varuṇa to look on.

[1] Dad, *tataḥ*: originally a child's word. [2] Mammy: *nanā*.

His bay steeds well maintain his power eternal, at one time bright and darksome at another.

6. This day, O gods, while Sūrya is ascending, deliver us from trouble and dishonour.

This prayer of ours may Varuṇa grant, and Mitra, and Aditi and Sindhu, Earth and Heaven.

Book ii. Hymn 28. VARUNA

1. This laud of the self-radiant wise Āditya shall be supreme o'er all that is in greatness.

I beg renown of Varuṇa the mighty, the god exceeding kind to him who worships.

2. Having extolled thee, Varuṇa, with thoughtful care may we have high fortune in thy service,

Singing thy praises like the fires at coming, day after day, of mornings rich in cattle.

3. May we be in thy keeping, O thou leader, wide-ruling Varuṇa, lord of many heroes.

O sons of Aditi, for ever faithful, pardon us, gods, admit us to your friendship.

4. He made them flow, the Āditya, the sustainer: the rivers run by Varuṇa's commandment.

These feel no weariness, nor cease from flowing: swift have they flown like birds in air around us.

5. Loose me from sin as from a bond that binds me: may we swell, Varuṇa, thy spring of Order.

Let not my thread, while I weave song, be severed, nor my work's sum, before the time, be shattered.

6. Far from me, Varuṇa, remove all danger: accept me graciously, thou holy sovran.

Cast off, like cords that hold a calf, my troubles: I am not even mine eyelid's lord without thee.

7. Strike us not, Varuṇa with those dread weapons which, Asura, at thy bidding wound the sinner.

Let us not pass away from light to exile. Scatter, that we may live, the men who hate us.

8. O mighty Varuṇa, now and hereafter, even as of old, will we speak forth our worship.

For in thyself, infallible god, thy statutes ne'er to be moved are fixed as on a mountain.

9. Wipe out what debts I have myself contracted; let me not profit, king, by gain of others.

Full many a morn remains to dawn upon us: in these, O Varuṇa, while we live direct us.

10. O king, whoever, be he friend or kinsman, hath threatened me affrighted in my slumber—

If any wolf or robber fain would harm us, therefrom, O Varuṇa, give thou us protection.

11. May I not live O Varuṇa, to witness my wealthy liberal, dear friend's destitution.

King, may I never lack well-ordered riches. Loud may we speak, with heroes, in assembly.

Book v. Hymn 85. VARUṆA

1. Sing forth a hymn sublime and solemn, grateful to glorious Varuṇa, imperial ruler,

Who hath struck out, like one who slays the victim, earth as a skin to spread in front of Sūrya.

2. In the tree-tops the air he hath extended, put milk in kine and vigorous speed in horses,

Set intellect in hearts, fire in the waters, Sūrya in heaven, and Soma on the mountain.

3. Varuṇa lets the big cask, opening downward, flow through the heaven and earth and air's mid-region.

Therewith the universe's sovran waters earth as the shower of rain bedews the barley.

4. When Varuṇa is fain for milk he moistens the sky, the land, and earth to her foundation.

Then straight the mountains clothe them in the rain-cloud: the heroes (i.e. the Maruts), putting forth their vigour, loose them.

5. I will declare this mighty deed of magic, of glorious Varuṇa the lord immortal;

Who standing in the firmament hath meted the earth out with the sun as with a measure.

6. None, verily, hath ever let or hindered this the most wise god's mighty deed of magic, [1]

Whereby, with all their flood, the lucid rivers fill not one sea wherein they pour their water.

7. If we have sinned against the man who loves us, have ever wronged a brother, friend, or comrade,

The neighbour ever with us, or a stranger, O Varuṇa, remove from us the trespass.

8. If we, as gamesters cheat at play, have cheated, done wrong unwittingly or sinned of purpose,

Cast all these sins away like loosened fetters, and Varuṇa, let us be thine own beloved.

Book x. Hymn 124. THE PASSING OF VARUNA

[This hymn is remarkable as indicating the passing of Varuṇa out of the popular religion and the exaltation of Indra.]

Indra speaks:

1. Come to this sacrifice of ours, O Agni, threefold [2] with seven threads [3] and five divisions.[4]

Be our oblation-bearer and preceder: thou hast lain long enough in during darkness.

Agni speaks: [5]

2. I come a god foreseeing from the godless [6] to immortality by secret pathways,

[1] *Māyām*, magic or device or design.

[2] The three daily oblations: pākayajna, haviryajna, soma-yajna.

[3] Conducted by the seven priests.

[4] Perhaps with five oblations. Meaning uncertain.

[5] Agni has left Varuṇa, who was being forgotten, and seeks Indra.

[6] Varuṇa is called 'godless' because as he ceased to be worshipped the sacrificial fire, *agni*, was not kindled in his honour.

While I, ungracious one, desert the gracious, leave mine own friends and seek the kin of strangers. [1]

3. I, looking to the guest of other lineage, [2] have founded many a rule of Law and Order.

I bid farewell to the great god, the Father, [3] and, for neglect, obtain my share of worship.

4. I tarried many a year within this altar. [4] I leave the Father, for my choice is Indra.

Away pass Agni, Varuṇa, and Soma. Kingship alternates: this [5] I come to favour.

Indra speaks:

5. These Asuras [6] have lost their powers of magic. But thou, O Varuṇa, if thou dost love me,

O king, discerning truth and right from falsehood, come and be lord and ruler of my kingdom. [7]

6. Here is the light of heaven, here all is lovely: here there is radiance, here is air's wide region.

Let us two slaughter Vṛitra. Forth, O Soma, Thou art oblation: we therewith will serve thee.

7. The sage [8] hath fixed his form by wisdom in the heavens: Varuṇa with no violence let the waters flow.

Like woman-folk, the floods that bring prosperity, have caught his hue and colour as they gleamed and shone.

8. These wait upon his [9] loftiest power and vigour: he dwells in these who triumph in their godhead;

And they, like people who elect their ruler, have in abhorrence turned away from Vṛitra.

[1] Go forth in sacrificial fire to Indra instead of to Varuṇa.

[2] Ordinary fire. [3] The Father is Varuṇa. [4] Varuṇa's altar.

[5] The supremacy of Indra is denoted by 'this'.

[6] The Asuras, immortals, like Agni, Varuṇa and Soma.

[7] Indra offers Varuṇa supremacy in his own heaven now that he has lost his general supremacy.

[8] Soma or Mitra. [9] Indra's.

9. They call him swan,[1] the abhorrent flood's companion, moving in friendship with celestial waters.
The poets in their thought have looked on Indra swiftly approaching when the Anuṣṭup[2] calls him.

Book i. Hymn 86. VARUNA

Book i. Hymn 25, one of the hymns to Varuṇa attributed to Śunahśepha has already been quoted in the section on Human Sacrifice. *See page 129.*

Book vii. Hymn 86. VARUNA

Book vii. Hymn 86, a hymn to Varuṇa has already been quoted in the section on the Prayers of the Aryans. *See page 150.*

Book i. Hymn 2. VAYU

1. Beautiful Vāyu come, for thee these soma-drops have been prepared:
Drink of them, hearken to our call.
2. Knowing the days, with soma-juice poured forth, the singers call to thee,
O Vāyu with their hymns of praise.
3. Vāyu, thy penetrating voice goes forth unto the worshipper,
Far-spreading for the soma draught.
4. Here, Indra-Vāyu, is the juice; come for our offered dainties' sake:
The drops are yearning for you both.

[1] Sūrya the Sun-god is sometimes so called.

[2] Either the hymn in the Anuṣṭup metre or dancing to the time of the Anuṣṭup metre. Metre and musical time are intimately connected with dancing.

5. Vāyu and Indra, well ye know libations, rich in sacred rites!
So come ye hither rapidly.
6. Vāyu and Indra, come to what the soma-presser hath prepared:
Soon, heroes, even with resolve.
7. Mitra, of holy strength, I call, and foe-destroying Varuṇa,
Who make the oil-fed rite complete.
8. Mitra and Varuṇa, through Law, (*ṛita*) lovers and cherishers of Law,
Have ye obtained your mighty power.
9. Our sages, Mitra-Varuṇa, of wide dominion, strong by birth,
Vouchsafe us strength that worketh well.

Book i. Hymn 156. VISHNU

1. For shining, widely famed, going thy wonted way, fed with the oil, be helpful, Mitra-like, to us.
So, Vishnu, e'en the wise must swell thy song of praise, and he who hath oblations pay thee solemn rites.
2. He who brings gifts to him the ancient and the last, to Vishnu who ordains, together with his spouse,
Who tells the lofty birth of him the lofty one, shall verily surpass in glory e'en his peer.
3. Him have ye satisfied, singers, as well ye know, primeval germ of Order even from his birth.
Ye, knowing e'en his name have told it forth; may we, Vishnu, enjoy the grace of thee the mighty one.
4. The sovran Varuṇa and both the Aśvins wait on this the will of him who guides the Marut host.
Vishnu hath power supreme and might that finds the day, and with his friend unbars the stable of the kine.[1]

[1] Vishnu assists Indra to release the light or the rain imprisoned in the clouds.

5. Even he the heavenly one who came for fellowship, Vishnu to Indra, godly to the godlier,
Who, maker, throned in three worlds, helps the Aryan man, and gives the worshipper his share of holy law.

Book i. Hymn 90. VISVEDEVAS

1. May Varuṇa with guidance straight, and Mitra lead us, he who knows,
And Aryaman in accord with gods,
2. For they are dealers forth of wealth, and, not deluded, with their might
Guard evermore the holy laws.
3. Shelter may they vouchsafe to us, immortal gods to mortal men,
Chasing our enemies away.
4. May they mark out our paths to bliss, Indra, the Maruts, Pūshan, and Bhaga, the gods to be adored.
5. Yea, Pūshan, Vishnu, ye who run your course, enrich our hymns with kine;
Bless us with all prosperity.
6. The winds waft sweets, the rivers pour sweets for the man who keeps the Law:
So may the plants be sweet for us.
7. Sweet be the night and sweet the dawns, sweet the terrestrial atmosphere;
Sweet be our father Heaven to us.
8. Vanaspati,[1] be full of sweets for us, and full of sweets the Sun:
May our milch-kine be sweet for us.
9. Be Mitra gracious unto us, and Varuṇa, and Aryaman:
Indra, Bṛihaspati, be kind, and Vishnu of the mighty stride.

[1] 'The lord of the forest,' perhaps the deified sacrificial post.

Book viii. Hymn 30. VISVEDEVAS

1. Not one of you, ye gods, is small, none of you is a feeble child:
All of you, verily, are great.
2. Thus be ye lauded, ye destroyers of the foe, ye three and thirty deities,
The gods of man, the holy ones.
3. As such defend and succour us, with benedictions speak to us:
Lead us not from our fathers' and from Manu's[1] path into the distance far away.
4. Ye deities who stay with us, and all ye gods of all mankind,
Give us your wide protection, give shelter for cattle and for steed.

Book i. Hymn 113. USHAS

1. This light has come, amid all lights the fairest; born is the brilliant, far-extending brightness.
Night, sent away for Savitar's[2] uprising, hath yielded up a birthplace for the morning.
2. The fair, the bright is come with her white offspring;[3] to her the dark one hath resigned her dwelling.
Akin, immortal, following each other, changing their colours both the heavens move onward.
3. Common, unending, is the sisters' pathway; taught by the gods, alternately they travel.
Fair formed, of different hues and yet one-minded, Night and Dawn clash not, neither do they tarry.
4. Bright leader of glad sounds,[4] our eyes behold her; splendid in hue she hath unclosed the portals.

[1] A sage named Manu, not the same as the famous law-giver, was an ancestor of the singer of this hymn.

[2] Savitar is the Sun. [3] The clouds.

[4] The voices of birds and animals.

She, stirring up the world hath shown us riches: Dawn hath awakened every living creature.

5. Rich Dawn, she sets afoot the coiled up sleeper, one for enjoyment, one for wealth or worship,

Those who saw little for extended vision: All living creatures hath the Dawn awakened.

6. One to high sway, one to exalted glory, one to pursue his gain, and one his labour:

All to regard their different vocations, all moving creature hath the Dawn awakened.

7. We see her there, the child of Heaven, apparent, the young maid flushing in her shining raiment.

Thou sovran lady of all earthly treasure, flush on us here, auspicious Dawn, this morning.

8. She, first of endless morns to come hereafter, follows the path of morns that have departed.

Dawn at her rising urges forth the living: him who is dead she wakes not from his slumber.

9. As thou, Dawn, hast caused Agni to be kindled,[1] and with the Sun's eye hast revealed creation,

And hast awakened men to offer worship, thou hast performed for gods a noble service.

10. How long a time and they shall be together—dawns that have shone and dawns to shine hereafter?

She yearns for former dawns with eager longing, and goes forth gladly shining with the others.

11. Gone are the men who in the days before us looked on the rising of the earlier morning.

We, we the living, now behold her brightness and they come nigh who shall hereafter see her.

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12. Foe-chaser,[2] born of Law (*rita*), the Law's protector, joy-giver, waker of all pleasant voices,

Auspicious, bringing food for gods' enjoyment, shine on us here, as best, O Dawn, this morning.

[1] In the morning sacrifice.

[2] Of evil spirits.

13. From days eternal hath Dawn shone, the goddess, and shows this light to-day, endowed with riches.

So will she shine on days to come; immortal, she moves on in her own strength, undecaying.

14. In the sky's borders hath she shone in splendour: the goddess hath thrown off the veil of darkness.

Awakening the world with purple horses, on her well-harnessed chariot Dawn approaches.

15. Bringing all life-sustaining blessings with her showing herself she sends forth brilliant lustre.

Last of the countless mornings that have vanished, first of bright morns to come hath Dawn arisen.

16. Arise, the breath, the life, again hath reached us: darkness hath passed away and light approacheth.

She for the Sun hath left a path to travel: we have arrived where men prolong existence.[1]

17. Singing the praises of refulgent mornings with his hymn's web the priest, the poet, rises.

Shine then to-day, rich maid, on him who lauds thee, shine down on us the gift of life and offspring.

18. Dawns giving sons all heroes, kine and horses, shining upon the man who brings oblations—

These let the Soma-presser gain when ending his glad songs louder than the voice of Vāyu.[2]

19. Mother of gods, Aditi's form of glory, ensign of sacrifice, shine forth exalted.

Rise up bestowing praise on our devotion: all-bounteous, make us chief among the people.

20. Whatever splendid wealth the Dawns bring with them to bless the man who offers praise and worship,

Even that may Mitra, Varuṇa vouchsafe us, and Aditi and Sindhu, Earth and Heaven.

[1] i. e. at the beginning of the life of a new day.

[2] The god of the wind.

Book vii. Hymn 77. USHAS

1. She hath shone brightly like a youthful woman stirring to motion every living creature.

Agni hath come to feed on mortals' fuel. She hath made light and chased away the darkness.

2. Turned to this All, far-spreading, she hath risen and shone in brightness with white robes about her.

She hath beamed forth lovely with golden colours, mother of kine, guide of the days she bringeth.

3. Bearing the gods' own eye (the sun), auspicious lady, leading her courser white and fair to look on,

Distinguished by her beams Dawn shines apparent, come forth to all the world with wondrous treasure.

4. Draw nigh with wealth and dawn away the foeman : prepare for us wide pasture free from danger.

Drive away those who hate us, bring us riches: pour bounty, opulent lady, on the singer.

5. Send thy most excellent beams to shine and light us, giving us lengthened days, O Dawn, O goddess.

Granting us food, thou who hast all things precious, and bounty rich in chariots, kine, and horses.

6. O Ushas, nobly-born, daughter of Heaven, whom the Vasiṣṭas with their hymns make mighty,

Bestow thou on us vast and glorious riches. Preserve us evermore, ye gods, with blessings.

Book x. Hymn 72. CREATION

[The poet describes the origin of the gods and the universe.]

1. Let us with tuneful skill proclaim these generations of the gods,

That one may see them when these hymns are chanted in a future age.

2. These[1] Brahmaṇaspati produced with blast and smelting, like a smith.

Existence, in an earlier age of gods, from non-existence sprang.

3. Existence in the earliest age of gods, from non-existence sprang.

Thereafter were regions[2] born. This sprang from the Productive Power.

4. Earth sprang from the Productive Power; the regions from the earth were born.

Daksha was born of Aditi, and Aditi was Daksha's child.

5. For Aditi, O Daksha, she who is thy daughter, was brought forth.

After her were the blessed gods, born of immortal parentage.

6. When ye, O gods, in yonder deep, close-clasping one another stood.

Thence, as of dancers, from your feet a thickening cloud of dust arose.[3]

7. When, O ye gods, like Yatis,[4] ye caused all existing things to grow,

Then he brought Sūrya forward who was lying hidden in the sea.

8. Eight are the sons[5] of Aditi who from her body sprang to life.

With seven she went to meet the gods: she cast Mārtāṇḍa[6] far away.

[1] All beings.

[2] The quarters of the horizon.

[3] Verses 6 and 7 seem to contain an independent account of the origin of the Universe from the dust caused by the dance of the gods.

[4] Yatis: devotees.

[5] Mitrā, Varuṇa, Dhātar, Aryaman, Anśa, Bhaga, Vivasvān, and Āditya the Sun.

[6] Mārtānda, a Vedic name of Sūrya.

9. So with her seven sons Aditi ent forth to meet the earlier age.

She brought Mārtāṇḍa thitherward to spring to life and die again.

Book x. Hymn 81. CREATION

[Viśvakarman is represented as the Father, Generator and Creator of all things and the Architect of the world.]

1. He who sate down as Hotar-priest the Rishi, our father, offering up all things existing,—

He, seeking through his wish a great possession, came among men on earth as archetypal.

2. What was the place whereon he took his station? What was it that supported him? How was it?

Whence Viśvakarman, seeing all, producing the earth, with mighty power disclosed the heavens.

3. He who hath eyes on all sides round about him, a mouth on all sides, arms and feet on all sides.

He, the sole god, producing earth and heaven, weldeth them with his arms as wings,[1] together.

4. What was the tree, what wood in sooth produced it, from which they[2] fashioned out the earth and heaven?

Ye thoughtful men inquire within your spirit whereon he stood when he established all things.

5. Thine highest, lowest, sacrificial natures, and these thy midmost here, O Viśvakarman;

Teach thou thy friends at sacrifice, O blessed, and come thyself, exalted, to our worship.[3]

6. Bring thou thyself, exalted with oblation, O Viśvakarman, Earth and Heaven to worship,[4]

[1] Fanning the flame in which the matter is smelted.

[2] They, 'the makers of the world directed by Parameśvara'; says Sāyana.

[3] 'Exhilarated, thyself offer up thyself'. MUIR.

[4] 'Thyself offer up heaven and earth.' MUIR.

Let other men around us live in folly: here let us have a rich and liberal patron.

7. Let us invoke to-day, to aid our labour, the lord of speech, the thought-swift Viśvakarman.

May he hear kindly all our invocations who gives all bliss for aid whose works are righteous.

Book x. Hymn 129. CREATION

[This hymn is said to have been written by Prajāpati, the Supreme.

Here says Max Müller we find the conception of a beginning of all things and of a state previous even to all existence. It is a hymn full of ideas which to many would seem to necessitate the admission of a long antecedent period of philosophical thought.—*Ancient Sanskrit Literature*, p. 559.]

1. Then[1] was not non-existent (*asat*) nor existent: there was no realm of air, no sky beyond it.

What covered in, and where? and what gave shelter? Was water there, unfathomed depth of water?

2. Death was not then, nor was there aught immortal: no sign was there, the day's and night's divider.

That One Thing,[2] breathless, breathed by its own nature: apart from it was nothing whatsoever.

3. Darkness there was: at first concealed in darkness this All was indiscriminated chaos,

All that existed then was void and formless: by the great power of Warmth was born that Unit.

4. Thereafter rose Desire[3] in the beginning, Desire, the primal seed and germ of Spirit.

[1] *Then*: in the beginning.

[2] The primal substance, the unit from which the Universe was evolved.

[3] Kāma.

Sages who searched with their heart's thought discovered the existent's kinship in the non-existent.

5. Transversely was their severing line extended :[1] what was above it then, and what below it ?

There were begetters, there were mighty forces, free action here and energy up yonder.

6. Who verily knows and who can here declare it, whence it was born and whence comes this creation ?

The gods are later than this world's production. Who knows then whence it first came into being?

7. He, the first origin of this creation, whether he formed it all or did not form it,

Whose eye controls this world in highest heaven, he verily knows it, or perhaps he knows not.

Book x. Hymn 14. YAMA AND THE SOULS OF THE DEAD

NOTE.—The verses of this hymn are used in the Hindu funeral ceremony as it is prescribed in the Sūtras. See Asvalayana, *Grihyasutra* iv. 1-6. The hymn is a funeral address, partly to Yama, the god of the dead, and partly to the soul of the departed whose body is being consumed on the pile. Yama, it will be remembered, was originally the first man who died and so showed the souls of his successors the way to the home of the departed.

1. Honour the king with thine oblations, Yama, Vivasvān's son, who gathers men together,

Who travelled to the lofty heights, above us, who searches out and shows the path to many.

2. Yama first found for us the road to travel : this pasture never can be taken from us.

Men born on earth tread their own paths that lead them whither our ancient Fathers have departed.

[1] To separate the upper and lower worlds.

3. Mātalī[1] prospers there with Kavyas,[2] Yama with Angiras'[3] sons, Bṛihaspati with Ṛikvans.[4]

Exalters of the gods, by gods exalted, some joy in praise and some in our oblation.

4. Come, seat thee on this bed of grass, O Yama, in company with Angirasas and Fathers.

Let texts recited by the sages bring thee: O king, let this oblation make thee joyful.

5. Come, Yama, with the Angirasas the holy, rejoice thee here with the children of Virūpa.[5]

Seated on sacred grass at this our worship: I call Vivasvān, too, thy father hither.

6. Our fathers are Angirasas, Navagvas, Atharvans, Bhṛigus[6] who deserve the soma.

May these, the holy, look on us with favour; may we enjoy their gracious loving-kindness.

[*The following verses are addressed to the spirit of the dead man whose funeral rites are being celebrated.*]

7. Go forth, go forth upon the ancient pathways whereon our sires of old have gone before us.

There shalt thou look on both the kings enjoying their sacred food, god Varuṇa and Yama.

8. Meet Yama, meet the Fathers (Pitris), meet the merit of free or ordered acts, in highest heaven.

Leave sin and evil, seek anew thy dwelling, and bright with glory wear another body.

9. Go hence, depart ye,[7] fly in all directions: this place for him the Fathers have provided.

[1] Mātalī a divine being, perhaps Indra.

[2] A class of the spirits of the dead.

[3] The typical first sacrificers, Angirasas.

[4] A class of spirits who sing the praise of Bṛihaspati.

[5] A sub-division of the Angirasas.

[6] Ancient priestly families.

[7] According to Sāyaṇa the ninth stanza is addressed to the Piśāchas and other evil spirits that haunt the place of cremation.

Yama bestows on him a place to rest in adorned with days and beams of light and waters.

10. Run[1] and outspeed the two dogs, Saramā's offspring, brindled, four-eyed, upon thy happy pathway.

Draw nigh, then to the gracious-minded Fathers where they rejoice in company with Yama,

11. And those two dogs of thine, Yama, the watchers, four-eyed, who look on men and guard the pathway,—

Entrust this man, O king, to their protection, and with prosperity and health endow him.

12. Dark-hued, insatiate, with distended nostrils, Yama's two envoys roam among the people;

May they restore to us a fair existence here and, to-day, that we may see the sunlight.

[*The three following stanzas are addressed to the priests:*]

13. To Yama pour the soma, bring to Yama consecrated gifts:

To Yama sacrifice prepared and heralded by Agni goes.

14. Offer to Yama holy gifts enriched with butter, and draw near,

So may he grant that we may live long days of life among the gods.

15. Offer to Yama, to the king, oblation very rich in meath:

Bow down before the rishis of the ancient times, who made this path in days of old.

16. Into[2] the three great jars it falls: six realms, the only lofty place,

The Gāyatrī, the Triṣṭup, all metres in Yama are contained.

[1] The spirit of the dead is addressed.

[2] This stanza is unintelligible.

Book x. Hymn 15. The Fathers

[This hymn is said to have been composed by Śankha, son of Yama. It is the only one specially addressed to the Pitris. Offerings are made to them, of which they are invited to partake, and blessings are solicited.]

1. May they ascend, the lowest, highest, midmost, the Fathers who deserve a share of soma.

May they who have attained the life of spirits, skilled in Law (*ṛita*), harmless, aid us when we call them.

2. Now let us pay this homage to the Fathers, to those who passed of old, and those who followed.

Those who have rested in the earthly region, and those who dwell among the mighty races.

3. I have attained the gracious-minded Fathers, I have gained son and progeny from Vishnu.

They who enjoy pressed juices with oblation, seated on sacred grass, come oftenest hither.

4. Fathers who sit on sacred grass, come, help us: these offerings have we made for you; accept them.

So come to us with most auspicious favour, and give us health and wealth without a trouble.

5. May they, the Fathers worthy of the soma, invited to their favourite oblations

Laid on the sacred grass, come nigh and listen: may they be gracious unto us and bless us.

6. Bowing your bended knees and seated southward, accept this sacrifice of ours with favour,

Punish us not for any sin, O Fathers, which we through human frality have committed.

7. Lapped in the bosom of the purple Mornings, give riches to the man who brings oblations.

Grant to your sons a portion of that treasure, and, present, give them energy, ye Fathers.

8. Our ancient Fathers, who deserve the soma who came, most noble, to our soma-banquet—

With these let Yama, yearning with the yearning, rejoicing eat our offerings at his pleasure.

9. Come to us, Agni, with the gracious Fathers who dwell in glowing light, the very Kavyas[1],

Who thirsted 'mid the gods, who hasten hither, oblation winners, theme of singers' praises.

10. Come, Agni, come with countless ancient Fathers, dwellers in light, primeval, god-adorers,

Eaters and drinkers of oblations, truthful, who travel with the deities and Indra.

11. Fathers whom Agni's flames have tasted,[2] come ye nigh: in perfect order take ye each your proper place.

Eat sacrificial food presented on the grass: grant riches with a multitude of hero sons.

12. Thou, Agni Jātavedas,[3] when entreated, didst bear the offerings which thou madest fragrant,

And give them to the Fathers who did eat them with Svadhā.[4] Eat, thou god, the gift we bring thee.

13. Thou, Jātavedas, knowest well the number of Fathers who are here and who are absent,

Of Fathers whom we know and whom we know not, accept the sacrifice well-prepared with portions.

14. They who, consumed by fire or not cremated, joy in their offering in the midst of heaven—

Grant them, O sovran lord, the life they merit, and their own body as thy pleasure wills it.

Book x. Hymn 18. THE FUNERAL HYMN

[This hymn, claimed to be written by a son of Yama, is important, as sanctioning widow marriage. Verse 8. The barbarous practice of widow burning was based upon a mistranslation of

[1] Kavyas: the spirits of an ancient pious race.

[2] Whose bodies have been cremated.

[3] See page 179 note.

[4] Svadhā is a sacrificial exclamation. Or it may mean the sacrificial offering due to each.

verse 7. The word *Agre* was altered into *Agne*. Max Müller describes this as perhaps the most flagrant instance of what can be done by an unscrupulous priesthood. Thousands of lives been sacrificed on the authority of a passage which was mangled, mistranslated and misapplied.]

1. Go hence, O Death,[1] pursue thy special pathway apart from that which gods are wont to travel.
To thee I say it who hast eyes and hearest: touch not our offspring, injure not our heroes.

[*Verse 2 is addressed to the kinsman of the deceased.*]

2. As ye have come effacing Mṛityu's footstep,[1] to farther times prolonging your existence,
May ye be rich in children and possessions, cleansed, purified, and meet for sacrificing.
3. Divided from the dead are these, the living: now is our calling on the gods successful.
We have come forth for dancing and for laughter, to farther times, prolonging our existence.
4. Here I[2] erect this ramparts for the living; let none of these, none other, reach this limit.
May they survive a hundred lengthened autumns, and may they bury death beneath this mountain.
5. As the days follow days in close succession, as with the seasons duly come the seasons,
As each successor fails not his fore-goer, so form lives of these, O great Ordainer.[3]
6. Live your full lives and find old age delightful, all of you striving one behind the other.
May Tvaṣṭar, maker of fair things, be gracious and lengthen out the days of your existence.

[1] *Death:* Mṛityu, distinct from Yama who was ruler of the departed. *Effacing Mṛityu's footstep*, means avoiding the path of death.

[2] The Adhvaryu raised a mound as limiting Death's domain.

[3] Dhātar, a divine being who is manager of all things.

7. Let these unwidowed dames with noble husbands adorn themselves with fragrant balm and unguent.

Decked with fair jewels, tearless, free from sorrow, first let the matrons pass unto their houses.

[*Verse 8 is spoken by the husband's brother, and others, to the wife of the dead man, while she is made to leave her husband's body.*]

8. Rise, come unto the world of life, O woman:[1] come he is lifeless by whose side thou liest.

Wifehood with this thy husband was thy portion, who took thy hand and wooed thee as a lover.

9. From his dead hand I take the bow he carried, that it may be our power and might and glory.[2]

There art thou, there; and here with noble heroes may we o'ercome all hosts that fight against us.

[*Verse 10 is addressed to the body. The urn containing the ashes was buried. The earth is asked not to press heavily upon it.*]

10. Betake thee to the lap of earth the mother, of earth far-spreading, very kind and gracious.

Young dame, wool-soft, unto the guerdon-giver, may she preserve thee from Destruction's[3] bosom.

11. Heave thyself, Earth, nor press thee downward heavily: afford him easy access, gently tending him.

Earth, as a mother wraps her skirt about her child, so cover him.

12. Now let the heaving earth be free from motion: yea, let a thousand clods remain above him.

Be they to him a home distilling fatness, here let them ever be his place of refuge.

[1] This is interpreted as showing that the widow remarried.

[2] Addressed to a dead Kshatriya.

[3] *Destruction*: Nirṛiti.

[*Verse 13 is addressed to the urn containing the ashes.*]

13. I stay the earth from thee, while over thee I place this piece of earth. May I be free from injury,
Here let the Fathers keep this pillar firm for thee, and there let Yama make thee an abiding place.
14. Even as an arrow's feathers, they have laid me down at day's decline.
My parting speech have I drawn back as 'twere a courser with the rein.

Book x. Hymn 191. THE PUBLIC ASSEMBLY

[This is the last hymn of the Rig-Veda. The subject is agreement in a general assembly (*Samiti*) of the people on some important occasion, such as the election of a King.]

1. Thou, mighty Agni, gatherest all that is precious for thy friend.
Bring us all treasures as thou art enkindled in libation's place.
2. Assemble, speak together: let your minds be all of one accord,
As ancient gods unanimous sit down to their appointed share.
3. The place is common, common the assembly, common the mind, so be their thought united.
A common purpose do I lay before you, and worship with your general oblation.
4. One and the same be your resolve, and be your minds of one accord.
United be the thoughts of all that all may happily agree.

Book viii. Hymn 69. THE CHARIOT RACE

The Hymn for success in a coming chariot race, a hymn to Indra, has been quoted in the chapter on the Social Life of the Early Aryans (p. 16).

Book x. 117. Liberality

[This hymn in praise of liberality is said to have been composed by the ṛishi Bhikshu (the 'beggar') son of Angiras.]

1. The gods have not ordained hunger to be our death: even to the well-fed man comes death in varied shape.

The riches of the liberal never waste away, while he who will not give finds none to comfort him.

2. The man with food in store who, when the needy comes in miserable case begging for bread to eat,

Hardens his heart against him—even when of old he did him service—finds not one to comfort him.

3. Bounteous is he who gives unto the beggar who comes to him in want of food and feeble.

Success attends him in the shout of battle. He makes a friend of him in future troubles.

4. No friend is he who to his friend and comrade who comes imploring food, will offer nothing.

Let him depart—no home is that to rest in—and rather seek a stranger to support him.

5. Let the rich satisfy the poor implorer, and bend his eye upon a longer pathway.[1]

Riches come now to one, and now to another, and like the wheels of cars are ever rolling.

6. The foolish man wins food with fruitless labour: that food—I speak the truth—shall be his ruin.

He feeds no trusty friend, no man to love him. All guilt is he who eats with no partaker.

7. The ploughshare ploughing makes the food that feeds us, and with its feet cuts through the path it follows.

[1] Carefully consider the future, remembering that he may be in need some day.

Better the speaking[1] than the silent Brahman: the liberal friend outvalues him who gives not.

8. He with one foot hath far outrun the biped, and the two-footed catches the three-footed.

Four-footed creatures come when bipeds call them, and stand and look where five are met together.[2]

9. The hands are both alike: their labour differs. The yield of sister milch-kine is unequal.

Twins even differ in their strength and vigour: two, even kinsmen, differ in their bounty.

Book i. Hymn 126. A Sage's Thanksgiving to a King

[The hymn writer, Kakshīvān feel asleep on a journey. He was roused in the morning by Raja Svanaya who took him home and gave him at once his ten daughters in marriage, presenting him at the same time with the gifts mentioned in the hymn. The poet praises the liberality of Svanaya, here called Bhāvya, from his father Bhava.]

1. With wisdom I present these lively praises of Bhāvya dweller on the bank of Sindhu (the Indus);

For he, unconquered king, desiring glory, hath furnished me a thousand sacrifices.

2. A hundred necklets from the king, beseeching, a hundred gift-steeds I at once accepted;

Of the lord's cows a thousand, I Kakshīvān. His deathless glory hath he spread to heaven.

[1] The priest who duly recites the Vedas, for which duty he has been engaged.

[2] The victory is not always won by those who seem most likely to win. The 'one-footed' (*ekapād*) is the Sun, which surpasses the 'biped' man. The 'biped' catches the 'three-footed' old man with his staff. The 'four-footed' are dogs. The 'five' are a group of men at which the dogs look uncertain whether their own masters are among them or not.

3. Horses of dusky colour stood beside me, ten chariots, Svanaya's gift, with mares to draw them.

Kine numbering sixty thousand followed after. Kakshīvān gained them when the days were closing.

4. Forty bay horses of the ten cars' master before a thousand lead the long procession.

Reeling in joy Kakshīvān's sons and Pajra's have groomed the coursers decked with pearly trappings.

5. An earlier gift for you have I accepted, eight cows, good milkers, and three harnessed horses,

Pajras, who with your wains with your great kinsman like troops of subjects have been fain for glory.[1]

Book x. Hymn 71. THE WISE JNANAM

[The commentator Sāyana says that this difficult hymn refers to Paramabrahmajnānam, knowledge of the highest truth so that man may be united with the Supreme.]

1. When men, Bṛihaspati, giving names to objects, sent out Vāk's[2] first and earliest utterances,

All that was excellent and spotless, treasured within them, was disclosed through their affection.

2. Where like men cleansing corn-flour in a cribble, the wise in spirit have created language,

Friends see and recognize the marks of friendship: their speech retains the blessed sign imprinted.

3. With sacrifice the trace of Vāk they followed, and found her harbouring within the ṛishis.[3]

They brought her, dealt her fourth in many

[1] The hymn ends with two more verses, supposed to be part of a love song which have no apparent relation to the rest of the hymn.

[2] Vāk: voice or speech deified.

[3] Men are to learn that the ṛishis alone understand speech for religious purposes.

places: seven singers make her tones resound in concert.

4. One man hath ne'er seen Vāk, and yet he seeth: one man hath hearing but hath never heard her.

But to another hath she shown her beauty as a fond well-dressed woman to her husband.

5. One man they call a laggard, dull in friendship: they never urge him on to deeds of valour.

He wanders on in profitless illusion: the Voice he heard yields neither fruit nor blossom.

6. No part in Vāk hath he who hath abandoned his own dear friend who knows the truth of friendship.

Even if he hears her still in vain he listens: naught knows he of the path of righteous action.

7. Unequal in the quickness of spirit are friends endowed alike with eyes and hearing.

Some looked like tanks that reach the mouth or shoulder, others like pools of water fit to bathe in.

8. When friendly Brahmans sacrifice together with mental impulse which the heart hath fashioned

They leave one far behind through their attainments, and some who count as Brahmans wander elsewhere.

9. Those men who step not back and move not forward,[1] nor Brahmans, nor preparers of libations,

Having attained to Vāk in sinful fashion spin out their thread in ignorance like spinsters.

10. All friends are joyful in the friend who cometh in triumph, having conquered in assembly.

He is their blame-averter, food-provider: prepared is he and fit for deed and vigour.

11. One plies his constant task reciting verses[2]: one sings the holy psalms[3] in Śakvarī measures.

[1] Take no active part in the ceremonies.

[2] Reciting verses, ṛicas, verses of the Rig-veda. This is the Hotri.

[3] The holy psalm, the Gāyatra or Sāman. This is the Udgātṛi, or chanter.

One more, the Brahman, tells the lore of being, and one lays down the rules of sacrificing.[1]

Book vi. Hymn 28. Cows[2]

1. The kine have come and brought good fortune: let them rest in the cow-pen and be happy near us.

Here let them stay prolific, many-coloured, and yield through many morns their milk for Indra.

2. Indra aids him who offers sacrifice and gifts: he takes not what is his, and gives him more thereto.

Increasing ever more and more his wealth, he makes the pious dwell within unbroken bounds.

3. These are ne'er lost, no robber ever injures them: no evil-minded foe attempts to harass them.

The master of the kine lives many a year with these, the cows whereby he pours his gifts and serves the gods.

4. The charger with his dusty brow o'ertakes them not,[3] and never to the shambles do they take their way.

These cows, the cattle of the pious worshipper, roam over wide-spread pasture where no danger is.

5. To me the cows seem Bhaga, they seem Indra,[4] they seem a portion of the first-poured Soma.

These present cows, they, O ye men, are Indra. I long for Indra with my heart and spirit.

6. O cows, ye fatten e'en the worn and wasted, and make the unlovely beautiful to look on.

Prosper my house, ye with auspicious voices. Your power is glorified in our asssmblies.

7. Crop good pasturage and be prolific; drink pure sweet water at goodly drinking-places.

[1] The Adhvaryu.

[2] The cows are the deified object of the hymn, except in stanza 2 and part of 8, where the deity is Indra.

[3] They are not to be captured by raiders.

[4] The cows seem to be like gods because of their goodness.

Never be thief or sinful man your master, and may the dart of Rudra still avoid you.

8. Now let this close admixture be close intermingled with these cows.

Mixt with the steer's prolific flow,[1] and, Indra, with thy hero might.

Book vii. Hymn 103. Frogs

[The hymn, says Max Müller, 'which is called a panegyric of the frogs, is clearly a satire on the priests.' It evidently belongs to a late period of Vedic poetry.]

1. They who lay quiet for a year, the Brahmans who fulfil their vows,

The frogs have lifted up their voice, the voice Parjanya hath inspired.

2. What time on these, as on a dry skin lying in the pool's bed, the floods of heaven descended,

The music of the frogs comes forth in concert like the cows' lowing with their calves beside them.

3. When at the coming of the Rains the water has poured upon them as they yearned and thirsted,

One seeks another as he talks and greets him with cries of pleasure as son his father.

4. Each of these twain receives the other kindly, while they are revelling in the flow of waters,

When the frog moistened by the rain springs forward, and Green and Spotty both combine their voices.

5. When one of these repeats the other's language, as he who learns the lesson of the teacher,

Your every limb seems to be growing larger as ye converse with eloquence on the waters.

6. One is Cow-bellow and Goat-bleat the other, one frog is Green and one of them is Spotty.

[1] The reference is to the mixture of milk and soma-juice. Soma is the 'steer'. The libation was offered to Indra.

They bear one common name, and yet they vary, and, talking, modulate the voice diversely.

7. As Brahmans, sitting round the brimful vessel, talk at the soma-rite of Atirātra.[1]

So, frogs, ye gather round the pool to honour this day of all the year, the first of Rain-time.

8. These Brahmans with the soma-juice, performing their year-long rite,[2] have lifted up their voices;

And these Adhvaryus, sweating with their kettles (or oblations), come forth and show themselves, and none are hidden.

9. They keep the twelve month's god-appointed order, and never do the men neglect the season.

Soon as the Rain-time in the year returneth, these who were heated kettles[3] gain their freedom.

10. Cow-bellow and Goat-bleat have granted riches, and Green and Spotty have vouchsafed us treasure.

The frogs who give us cows in hundreds lengthen our lives in this most fertilizing season.

Book iii. Hymn 33. Two Rivers and a Sage

[This is a dialogue between the sage Viśvamitra and the rivers Vipāś (the modern Bīās) and Śutudrī (the modern Sutlej). The story is that the sage sung this hymn at the confluence of the Vipāś and Śutudrī in order to make them fordable when he wished to cross. It may refer to the early journeys of the Aryans.]

Viśvamitra addresses the rivers:

1. Forth from the bosom of the mountains, eager as two swift mares with loosened rein contending,

Like two bright mother cows who lick their youngling, Vipāś and Śutudrī speed down their waters.

[1] Probably a ceremony accompanied by the recitation of hymns at night.

[2] Sāyaṇa explains this as a reference to a series of sacrifices, the *Gavām ayanam*, 'the going of the cows,' lasting a year.

[3] Scorched in the hot weather.

2. Impelled by Indra whom ye pray to urge you, ye move as 'twere on chariots to the ocean.

Flowing together, swelling with your billows, O lucid streams, each of you seeks the other.

3. I have attained the most maternal river, we have approached Vipāś, the broad, the blessed.

Licking as 'twere their calf the pair of mothers flow onward to their common home together.

The rivers speak:

4. We two who rise and swell with billowy waters move forward to the home which gods have made us.

Our flood may not be stayed when urged to motion. What would the singer, calling to the rivers?

The sage speaks:

5. Linger a little at my friendly bidding; rest, holy ones, a moment in your journey.

With hymn sublime soliciting your favour, Kuśika's son hath called unto the river.

The rivers speak:

6. Indra who wields the thunder dug our channels: he smote down Vṛitra, him who stayed our currents.

Savitar, god, the lovely-handed, led us, and at his sending forth we flow expanded.

The sage speaks:

7. That hero deed of Indra must be lauded for ever that he rent Ahi[1] in pieces.

He smote away the obstructors with his thunder, and eager for their course forth flowed the waters.

The rivers speak:

8. Never forget this word of thine, O singer, which future generations shall re-echo.

In hymns, O bard, show us thy loving-kindness. Humble us not mid men. To thee be honour.

[1] The serpent demon of drought.

The sage speaks:

9. Listen, ye sisters, to the bard who cometh to you from far away with car and wagon.
Bow lowly down; be easy to be traversed: stay rivers, with your floods below our axles.

The rivers speak:

10. Yea, we will listen to thy words, O singer. With wain and cart from far away thou comest.
Low will I bend me, like a nursing mother, and yield me as a maiden to her lover.

The sage speaks:

11. Soon as the Bharatas[1] have fared across thee, the warrior band, urged on and sped by Indra,
Then let your streams flow on in rapid motion. I crave your favour who deserve our worship.
12. The warrior host, the Bharatas, fared over: the singer won the favour of the rivers.
Swell with your billows, hasting, pouring riches. Fill full your channels, and roll swiftly onward.
13. So let your wave bear up the pins, and ye, O waters, spare the thongs;
And never may the pair of bulls, harmless and sinless, waste away.[2]

Book v. Hymn 40. THE ECLIPSE

[The Hindu explanation of eclipses is that they are caused by the Asura Rāhu seeking to seize the sun and moon. In the Vedas he is called Svarbhānu. The sun is supposed to be delivered by this hymn, chanted by the ṛishi Atri, and expresses his gratitude. The verses referring to the eclipse alone are quoted.]

[1] The Bharatas were an important Aryan tribe, of the same race as Viśvāmitra.

[2] The thirteenth verse seems to be a later addition. It is in different metre.

The sage speaks:

5. O Sūrya, when the Asura's descendant, Svarbhānu, pierced thee through and through with darkness,
All creatures looked like one who is bewildered, who knoweth not the place where he is standing.

6. What time thou smotest down Svarbhānu's magic that spread itself beneath the sky, O Indra,
By his fourth[1] sacred-prayer Atri[2] discovered Sūrya concealed in gloom that stayed his function.

The sun speaks:

7. Let not the oppressor with this dread, through anger swallow me up, for I am thine, O Atri.
Mitra art thou, the sender of true blessings: thou and king Varuṇa be both my helpers.

The sage speaks:

8. The Brahman Atri, as he set the press-stones,[3] serving the gods with praise and adoration,
Established in the heaven the eye of Sūrya, and caused Svarbhānu's magic arts to vanish.

9. The Atris found the Sun again, him whom Svarbhānu of the brood
Of Asuras had pierced with gloom. This none beside had power to do.

Book x. Hymn 34. THE GAMBLER

[In this hymn a gambler apparently describes his own experience.]

1. Sprung from tall trees[4] on windy heights, these rollers transport me as they turn upon the table.

[1] Stanzas 5–8 of this hymn.
[2] Atri is the ṛishi singing this hymn.
[3] For pressing out the juice of the soma-plant.
[4] Nuts were used for dice in early times.

Dearer to me the die that never slumbers than the deep draught of Mūjavān's own soma.[1]

2. She never vexed me nor was angry with me, but to my friends and me was ever gracious.

For the die's sake whose single point is final mine own devoted wife I alienated.

3. My wife holds me aloof, her mother hates me: the wretched man finds none to give him comfort.

As of a costly horse grown old and feeble, I find not any profit of the gamester.

4. Others caress the wife of him whose riches the die hath coveted, that rapid courser:

Of him speak father, mother, brothers, saying, We know him not: bind him and take him with you.

5. When I resolve to play with these no longer, my friends depart from me and leave me lonely,

When the brown dice, thrown on the board, have rattled, like a fond girl I seek the place of meeting.

6. The gamester seeks the gambling-house, and wonders, his body all afire, Shall I be lucky?

Still do the dice extend his eager longing, staking his gains against his adversary.

7. Dice, verily, are armed with goads and driving-hooks, deceiving and tormenting, causing grievous woe.

They give frail gifts and then destroy the man who wins, thickly anointed with the player's fairest good.

8. Merrily sports their troop, the three-and-fifty,[2] like Savitar the god, whose ways are faithful.

They bend not even to the mighty's anger: the king himself pays homage and reveres them.

9. Downward they roll, and then spring quickly upward, and, handless, force the man with hands to serve them.

[1] Mūjavān was a mountain on which the soma-plant grew.

[2] The meaning is uncertain.

Cast on the board, like lumps of magic charcoal though cold themselves they burn the heart to ashes.

10. The gambler's wife is left forlorn and wretched: the mother mourns the son who wanders homeless.

In constant fear, in debt, and seeking riches, he goes by night unto the home of others.

11. Sad is the gambler when he sees a matron, another's wife, and his well-ordered dwelling.

He yokes the brown steeds [1] in the early morning, and when the fire is cold sinks down an outcast.

12. To the great captain [2] of your mighty army, who hath become the host's imperial leader,

To him I show my ten extended fingers: [3] I speak the truth. No wealth am I withholding.

13. Play not with dice: no, cultivate thy corn-land. Enjoy the gain, and deem that wealth sufficient,

There are thy cattle, there thy wife, O gambler. So this good Savitar himself hath told me.

14. Make me your friend: show us some little mercy. Assail us not with your terrific fierceness,

Appeased be your malignity and anger, and let the brown dice snare some other captive.

Book vi. Hymn 75. Weapons of War

[Griffith says that the deified objects are the armour and warlike weapons, charioteer, chariot, horses, etc., and the tutelary deities, addressed, mentioned or invoked in the hymn. The hymn is too long for quotation. The following are some of the principal verses.]

The bow and arrows:

2. With bow let us win kine, with bow the battle, with bow be victors in our hot encounters.

[1] Begins throwing the brown dice.

[2] The dice marked with highest numbers.

[3] To show that I have nothing left.

The bow brings grief and sorrow to the foeman: armed with the bow may we subdue all regions.

3. Close to his ear, as fain to speak, she[1] presses, holding her well-loved friend in her embraces.

Strained on the bow, she whispers like a woman[2]—this bowstring that preserves us in the combat.

4. These, meeting like a woman and her lover, bear, mother-like, their child[3] upon their bosom.

May the two bow-ends, starting swift asunder, scatter, in unison, the foes who hate us.

5. With many a son, father of many daughters,[4] he clangs and clashes as he goes to battle,

Slung on the back, pouring his brood, the quiver vanquishes all opposing bands and armies.

11. Her tooth a deer, dressed in an eagle's feathers, bound with cow-hide, launched forth, she flieth onward.

There where the heroes speed hither and thither, there may the arrows shelter and protect us.

16. Loosed from the bowstring fly away, thou arrow, sharpened by our prayer.

Go to the foemen, strike them home, and let not one be left alive.

The charioteer, chariot and his whip:

6. Upstanding in the car the skilful charioteer guides his strong horses on withersoe'er he will.

See and admire the strength of those controlling reins which from behind declare the will of him who drives.

7. Horses whose hoofs rain dust are neighing loudly, yoked to the chariots, showing forth their vigour.

[1] The bowstring.

[2] Homer likens the sound to the call of a swallow.

[3] The arrow.

[4] The quiver is said to be father of sons and daughters because the words signifying 'arrow' are both masculine and feminine.

With their forefeet descending on the foemen, they, never flinching, trample and destroy them.

13. He lays his blows upon their backs, he deals his blows upon their thighs.

Thou, whip, who urgest horses, drive sagacious horses in the fray.

The hymn concludes thus:

19. Whoso would kill us, whether he be a strange foe or one of us,

May all the gods discomfit him. My nearest, closest mail is prayer.

Book i. Hymn 187. ANNASTUTI, PRAISE OF FOOD

['According to Saunaka, this hymn should be recited by a person about to eat, when his food will never disagree with him; its repetition also, accompanied with oblations and worship, will secure him against want of food, and if he should have taken poison, its silent repetition will act as an antidote.'—WILSON.]

1. Now will I glorify Food that upholds great strength,

By whose invigorating power Trita[1] rent Vṛitra limb from limb.

2. O pleasant Food,[2] O Food of meath, thee have we chosen for our own,

So be our kind protector thou.

3. Come hitherward to us, O Food, auspicious with auspicious help,

Health-bringing, not unkind, a dear and guileless friend.

4. These juices which, O Food, are thine throughout the regions are diffused.

Like winds they have their place in heaven.

5. These gifts of thine, O Food, O Food most sweet to taste,

[1] Trita is Indra pervading the three worlds.

[2] The god addressed is Soma.

These savours of thy juices work like creatures that have mighty necks.[1]

6. In thee, O Food, is set the spirit of great gods.
Under thy flag brave deeds were done: he slew the dragon with thy help.

7. If thou be gone unto the splendour of the clouds,
Even from thence, O Food of meath, prepared for our enjoyment, come.

8. Whatever morsel we consume from waters or from plants of earth, O Soma, wax thou fat thereby,

9. What, Soma, we enjoy from thee in milky food or barley-brew, Vātāpi[2] grow thou fat thereby.

10. O Vegetable, cake of meal, be wholesome, firm, and strengthening:
Vātāpi,[4] grow thou fat thereby.

11. O Food, from thee as such have we drawn forth with lauds, like cows, our sacrificial gifts,
From thee who banquetest with gods, from thee who banquetest with us.

Book vii. Hymn 55. VASTOSPATI AND INDRA
THE SPELL OF THE HOUSE-BREAKER

[The hymn appears to be made up of three unconnected pieces. The first verse is addressed to Vāstoṣpati, the guardian god of the house. Verses 2–4 are addressed by the spirits of Indra's worshippers to one of Yama's dogs who would prevent there entering the home of the pious dead. Saramā, the hound of Indra, was the mother of the two spotted watch-dogs of Yama. Verses 5–8 form a sleep song. It was recited by thieves and house-breakers to put people to sleep.]

1. Vāstoṣpati, who killest all disease, and wearest every form,
Be an auspicious friend to us.

[1] Bullocks.

[2] The fermenting soma-juice; or, according to Sāyaṇa, the body.

2. When, O bright son of Saramā, thou showest, tawny-hued! thy teeth,

They gleam like lances' points within thy mouth when thou wouldest bite: go thou to sleep.

3. Saramā's son, retrace thy way: bark at the robber and the thief.

At Indra's singers barkest thou? Why dost thou seek to terrify us? Go to sleep.

4. Be on thy guard against the boar, and let the boar beware of thee.

At Indra's singers barkest thou? Why dost thou seek to terrify us? Go to sleep.

5. Sleep mother, let the father sleep, sleep dog and master of the house.

Let all the kinsmen sleep, sleep all the people who are round about.

6. The man who sits, the man who walks, and whosoever looks on us,

Of these we closely shut the eyes, even as we closely shut this house.

7. The Bull who hath a thousand horns, who rises up from out the sea—

By him the strong and mighty one we lull and make the people sleep.

8. The women sleeping in the court, lying without, or stretched on beds,

The matrons with their odorous sweets[1]—these, one and all, we lull to sleep.

Book vii. Hymn 104. A Spell against Evil Spirits

[The hymn consists chiefly of imprecations directed against Rākshasas, demons, and Yātudhānas, a kind of goblin. These foes are supposed to go about at night, disturbing sacrifices and pious men, ensnaring and even devouring human beings, and

[1] The garlands of flowers worn on festive occasions.

generally hostile to the human race. The hymn is too long to be quoted in full.]

1. Indra and Soma, burn, destroy the demon foe, send downward, O ye Bulls, those who add gloom to gloom.

Annihilate the fools, slay them and burn them up: chase them away from us, pierce the voracious ones.

2. Indra and Soma, let sin round the wicked boil like as a caldron set amid the flames of fire.

Against the foe of prayer, devourer of raw flesh, the vile fiend fierce of eye, keep ye perpetual hate.

3. Indra and Soma, plunge the wicked in the depth, yea, cast them into darkness that hath no support,

So that not one of them may ever thence return: so may your wrathful might prevail and conquer them.

4. Indra and Soma, hurl your deadly crushing bolt down on the wicked fiend from heaven and from the earth.

Yea, forge out of the mountains your celestial dart wherewith ye burn to death the waxing demon race.

5. Indra and Soma, cast ye downward out of heaven your deadly darts of stone burning with fiery flame,

Eternal, scorching darts; plunge the voracious ones within the depth, and let them sink without a sound.

18. Spread out, ye Maruts search among the people: seize ye and grind the Rākshasas to pieces,

Who fly abroad transformed to birds, at night time; or sully and pollute our holy worship.

24. Indra destroy the demon, male and female, joying and triumphing in arts of magic.

Let the fools' gods[1] with bent necks fall and perish, and see no more the sun when he arises.

[1] Fools' gods, *mûradevāḥ*, perhaps a species of demon.

25. Look each one hither, look around: Indra and Soma, watch ye well.
Cast forth your weapon at the fiends; against the sorcerers hurl your bolt.

Book x. Hymn 145. A Spell against a Rival Wife

Sapatnībādhanam

[The hymn is a spell to rid a jealous wife of a more favoured rival. The singer is Indrāṇi, the consort of Indra.]

1. From out the earth I dig this plant, an herb of most effectual power,
Wherewith one quells the rival wife and gains the husband for oneself.
2. Auspicious, with expanded leaves, sent by the gods, victorious plant,
Blow thou the rival wife away, and make my husband only mine.
3. Stronger am I; O stronger one, yea, mightier than the mightier;
And she who is my rival wife is lower than the lowest dames.
4. Her very name I utter not: she takes no pleasure in this man.
Far into distance most remote drive we the rival wife away.
5. I am the conqueror, and thou, thou also art victorious:
As victory attends us both we will subdue my fellow-wife.
6. I have gained thee for vanquisher, have grasped thee with a stronger spell.
As a cow hastens to her calf, so let thy spirit[1] speed to me, hasten like water on its way.

[1] The spirit of the husband overpowered by the spell.

Book x. Hymn 164. A Spell against Evil Dreams *(Duḥsvapnaghnam)*

1. Avaunt, thou master of the mind.[1] Depart, and vanish far away
Look on Destruction[2] far from hence. The live man's mind is manifold.
2. A happy boon do men elect, a mighty blessing they obtain.
Bliss with Vaivasvata[3] they see. The live man's mind seeks many a place.
3. When by address, by blame, by imprecation we have committed sin, awake or sleeping,
All hateful acts of ours, all evil doings may Agni bear away to distant places.
4. When, Indra, Brahmaṇaspati, our deeds are wrongful and unjust,
Prachetās the Āngirasa[4] present our foes from troubling us.
5. We have prevailed this day and won: we are made free from sin and guilt.
Ill thoughts, that visit us awake or sleeping, seize the man we hate, yea, seize the man who hateth us.

[1] The spirit of evil dreams.

[2] The goddess Nirṛiti.

[3] Sāyaṇa says that Vaivasvata is Yama, son of Vivasvān, who presides over evil dreams.

[4] Prachetās the ṛishi who is said to have composed this hymn was a descendant of the early priestly family of the Āngirasas, special worshippers of Varuṇa.

THE SAMA-VEDA

As already mentioned, the Sāma-veda consists largely of extracts from the Rig-veda. Hymns, portions of hymns, and detached verses are transposed and rearranged without reference to their original order, and there are frequent variations from the text of the Rig-veda. The first hymn is considered a later addition. The second hymn, as translated by Griffith, is given to afford some idea of the composition of the book. The references appended to each verse show where the verse appears in the Rig-veda.

1. O Agni, God, the people sing reverent praise to thee for strength;
With terrors trouble thou the foe!

viii. 64. 10.

2. I seek with song your messenger, oblation-bearer, lord of wealth,
Immortal, best at sacrifice.

iv. 8. 1.

3. Still turning to their aim in thee the sacrificer's sister hymns
Have come to thee before the wind.

viii. 91. 13.

4. To thee illuminer of night, O Agni, day by day, with prayer,
Bringing thee reverence, we come.

i. 1. 7.

5. Help, thou who knowest lauds, this work, a lovely hymn in Rudra's praise,
Adorable in every house.

i. 27. 10.

6. To this fair sacrifice to drink the milky draught art thou called forth;
O Agni, with the Maruts come!

i. 19. 1.

7. With homage will I reverence thee, Agni, like a long-tailed steed,
Imperial lord of holy rites.

i. 27. 1.

8. As Aurva and as Bhṛigu called, as Apnavāna[1] called, I call.
The radiant Agni robed with sea.

viii. 91. 4.

9. When he enkindles Agni, man should with his heart attend the song:
I kindle Agni till he glows.

viii. 91. 22.

10. Then, verily, they see the light refulgent of primeval seed,
Kindled on yonder side of heaven.

viii. 6. 30.

[1] Names of sages.

THE YAJUR-VEDA

IT is practically impossible to give a reading from the Yajur-veda as it would not be intelligible without an extensive commentary on almost every clause. The Fortieth Book of the White Yajur-veda might have been quoted, but it is not typical, being really a short Upanishad.

A verse from the ordinary matter of the book will justify the above statement.

White Yajur-veda. Book v. Verse 12

Thou[1] art a lioness. All hail. Thou art a lioness winning Ādityas. All-hail.

Thou art a lioness winning Brahmans and Nobles. All hail.

Thou art a lioness that wins fair off-spring, win abundant wealth. All hail.

A lioness art thou. Bring the gods hither for him who offers sacrifice. All hail.

To living creatures, thee.[2]

[1] From the commentators we gather that during the Soma sacrifice with these four invocations the Adhvaryu poured butter on the four corners of the altar place, and with the fifth on the centre. *Thou* in the first lines is the altar.

[2] *Thee* : the offering ladle. '*I raise*' is understood.

THE ATHARVA-VEDA

[MUCH of the Atharva-veda is directly derived from the Rig-veda. For instance the sixth hymn in Book xix is the Puruṣa Sūkta, the ninetieth hymn of Book x of the Rig-veda. Such hymns are of course not characteristic of the beliefs in magic of many kinds probably largely developed by intercourse with the demon-worshipping aborigines which is one of the chief features of the deterioration of the earlier Aryan faith. A few of these spells and prayers are quoted here.]

A spell against Fever

[The tribes mentioned in these verses seem to be hostile or alien tribes who lived on the borders of the lands in which the Aryans dwelt.]

1. Hence, filled with holy strength let Agni. Soma, and Varuṇa, the Press-stone and the Altar,
And Grass, and glowing Fuel banish Fever, Let hateful things stay at a distance yonder.

2. And thou thyself who makest all men yellow, consuming them with burning heat like Agni,
Thou, Fever! then be weak and ineffective. Pass hence into realms below or vanish.

7. Go, Fever, to the Mūjavans, or farther, to the Bahlikas.
Seek a lascivious Śūdra girl and seem to shake her through and through.

8. Go hence and eat thy kinsmen the Mahāvṛishas and Mūjavans.
These or those foreign regions we proclaim to Fever for his home.

12. Go Fever, with Consumption, thy brother, and with thy sister, Cough,
And with thy nephew Herpes, go away unto that alien folk.
13. Chase Fever whether cold or hot, brought by the summer or the rains,
Tertian, intermittent, or autumnal, or continual.
14. We to Gandhāris, Mūjavans, to Angas and to Māgadhas
Hand over Fever as it were a servant and a thing of price.

Atharva-veda, v. 22. 1, 2, 7, 8, 12, 13-14.

Amulets

[An amulet is some object supposed to have magic powers, worn as a remedy or preservative against evils or mischief, such as diseases or witchcraft. Plants were often used as amulets such as *Arundhati*, a medicinal climbing plant; the *Asvattha*, the pipal, or sacred fig-tree. The *horn* of the roebuck was employed to drive away hereditary disease. *Lead* was used as a charm against diseases and sorcery. The following non-metrical formula describes the power of an amulet.]

1. Power art thou, give me power. All hail!
2. Might art thou, give me might. All hail!
3. Strength art thou, give me strength. All hail!
4. Life art thou, give me life. All hail!
5. Ear art thou, give me hearing. Hail!
6. Eye art thou, give me eyes. All hail!
7. Shield art thou, shield me well. All hail!

Atharva-veda, ii. 17.

A prayer against him who robs a Brahman of his cow

5. Of the Kshatriya who taketh to himself this Brahman's cow and oppresseth the Brahman,

6. The glory, the heroism, and the favouring fortune depart.
7. The energy and vigour, the power and might, the speech and mental strength, the glory and duty; 8 devotion and princely sway, kingship and people, brilliance and honour, and splendour and wealth . . .
11. All these blessings of a Kshatriya depart from him when he oppresseth the Brahman and taketh to himself the Brahman's cow.
17. Therefore the Brahmans' cow is held inviolable by the wise . . .
65. So, Goddess's cow, do thou from him, the Brahman's tyrant, criminal, niggard, blasphemer of the gods.
66. With hundred-knotted thunderbolt, sharpened and edged with razor blades,
67. Strike off the shoulders and the head.
68. Snatch thou the hair from off his head, and from his body strip the skin:
69. Tear out his sinews, cause his flesh to fall in pieces from his frame.
70. Crush thou his bones together, strike and beat the marrow out of him.
71. Dislocate all his limbs and joints.
72. From earth let the carnivorous Agni drive him, let Vāyu burn him from mid-air's broad region,
73. From heaven let Sūrya drive him and consume him.

Atharva-veda xii. 5

A merchant's prayer for success in business

[The prayer is primarily addressed to the 'Merchant Indra,' who sells blessings to those who make offerings to him. Vaiśvānara and Jātavedas are epithets applied to Agni.]

1. I stir and animate the merchant Indra: may he approach and be our guide and leader.

Chasing ill-will, wild beast, and highway robber, may he who hath the power give me riches.

2. The many paths which gods are wont to travel, the paths which go between the earth and heaven,

May they rejoice with me in milk and fatness that I may make rich profit by my purchase.

3. With fuel, Agni! and with butter, longing, mine offering I present for strength and conquest;

With prayer, so far as I have strength, adoring—this holy hymn to gain a hundred treasures.

4. Pardon this stubbornness of ours, O Agni, the distant pathway which our feet have trodden.

Propitious unto us be sale and barter, may interchange of merchandise enrich me.

Accept, ye twain, accordant, this libation! Prosperous be our ventures and incomings.

5. The wealth wherewith I carry on my traffic, seeking, ye gods! wealth with the wealth I offer,

May this grow more for me, not less: O Agni, through sacrifice chase those away who hinder profit!

6. The wealth wherewith I carry on my traffic, seeking, ye gods! wealth with the wealth I offer.

Herein may Indra, Savitar, and Soma, Prajāpati and Agni give me splendour.

7. With reverence we sing thy praise, O Hotar-priest Vaiśvānara ('dear to all men').

Over our children keep thou watch, over our bodies, kine, and lives.

8. Still to thee ever will we bring oblation, as to a stabled horse, O Jātavedas.

Joying in food and in the growth of riches may we thy servants, Agni, never suffer.

Atharva-veda iii. 15.

A Woman's Love Charm

1. This is the Apsarases' love-spell, the conquering resistless ones'.

Send the spell forth, ye Deities! Let him consume with love of me.

2. I pray, may he remember me, think of me, loving and beloved.

Send forth the spell, ye Deities! let him consume with love of me.

3. That he may think of me, that I may never, never think of him.

Send forth the spell, ye Deities! Let him consume with love of me.

4. Madden him, Maruts, madden him. Madden him, madden him, O Air.

Madden him, Agni, madden him. Let him consume with love of me.

Atharva-veda vi. 130.

APPENDIX I

Traditions concerning the Origin of the Vedas

The painstaking research of Dr. John Muir has made the theories of the origin of the Vedas contained in the Sacred Books of the Hinduism accessible to every student. They are set forth with the Sanskrit passages on which they are founded or in which they are expressed in the third volume of his *Original Sanskrit Texts.*

It is impossible to discuss all these theories here, or to quote all the passage bearing on them. A careful selection of the most important is all that can be attempted here.

Traditions in the Hymns

There are comparatively few statements in the Vedas that give any hint of the history of the writers of the Vedic Hymns or of the conditions in which their ancestors had entered into and settled in north-west India. But the name of the author of each Hymn is preserved in the *Anukramaṇī* or index to the contents of each Veda which has been handed down from very ancient times. The defenders of the eternity of the Vedic Hymns argue that these ṛishis were not and do not really claim to be the authors of the Hymns which are said to be their words (Muir, *Sanskrit Texts*, III. 85)

but that they merely repeated the Hymns and other parts of the Vedas that they had 'seen'.

Consideration of the words of the ṛishis will, however, show that they distinctly speak of themselves as the authors of the Hymns, without any reference to any supernatural inspiration; and that they uttered the Hymns before an artificial dogma had as yet begun to assign a mysterious divinity to the Hymns to secure sanctions for the elaborate system of priestcraft described in the Brāhmaṇas.

Dr. Muir has arranged the sayings of the ṛishis in which they claim to be actual authors of the Hymns in three classes, according to the Sanskrit verb which used to express the idea. These verbs are three:

Kṛi, to make
Taksh, to fabricate
Jan, to beget, generate or produce.

The verb *Kṛi* is very frequently used. Its meaning is to do, to make, to manufacture, prepare, work at, build, construct or compose, and the ṛishis used it in this sense of the Hymns that they had composed. There is no suggestion that they considered that they were merely repeating what had existed from eternity in the minds of the Gods.

Four examples may be given.

Kaṇvāso vām brahma kriṇvanti adhvare teshām su śṛiṇutam havam |

'The Kanvas make a prayer to you: hear well their invocation.'

Rig-veda i. 47. 2.

Evā te hariyojanā suvṛikti Indra brahmāṇi Gotamāsaḥ akran |

'Thus O Indra, yoker of steeds, have the Gotamas made hymns for thee efficaciously.'

Rig-veda i. 61. 16.

Etāni vām Aśvinā vardhanāni brahma stomam Gṛitsamadāsaḥ akran |

'These magnifying prayers, [this] hymn, O Aśvins, the Gritsamadas have *made* for you.'

Rig-veda ii. 39. 8.

Adha priyam śūsham Indrāya manma brahmakṛito Vṛihadukthād avāchi |

'An acceptable and powerful hymn has been uttered to Indra by Vrihaduktha, maker of hymns.'

Rig-veda x. 54. 6.

The verb *Taksh* is less common. It means to form by cutting, or by the plane or chisel; to chop, slice, fashion out of wood as a carpenter does, and so to form in the mind or invent. *Takshaka* and *Takshan* (*Tassan* in Tamil) are two Sanskrit names for a carpenter. From this it will be seen that by using this verb the ṛishi thinks of himself as the inventor or maker of the Hymns that he utters just as the carpenter is the maker of a cart or a plough. There is here again no suggestion of the later tradition.

Two passages will be sufficient as examples.

Sanāyate Gotamaḥ Indra navyam atakshad brahma hariyojanāya ityādi |

'Nodhas, descendant of Gotama, fashioned this new hymn for [thee] Indra.'

Rig-veda i. 62. 13.

Etam te stomam tuvi-jāta vipro ratham na dhīraḥ svapāḥ atakṣham |

'I, a sage, have fabricated this hymn for thee, O powerful [deity], as a skilful workman fashions a car.'

Rig-veda v. 2. 11.

The verb *Jan* means to generate or beget and there are many passages in which the ṛishis used this simile. However later tradition may interpret the phrase it indicates that the vedic poets fully believed that they themselves were the authors of the Hymns that they sung.

There is no need to quote many passages.

Navam nu stomam Agnaye divah śyenāya jījanam vasvaḥ | kuvid vanāti naḥ |

'I have generated a new hymn to Agni, the falcon of the sky ; will he not bestow on us wealth in abundance ?'

Rig-veda vii. 15. 4.

Suvṛiktim Indrāya brahma janayanta viprāḥ |

'The sages generated an efficacious production and a prayer for Indra.'

Rig-veda vii. 31. 11.

Asmai te pratiharyate Jātavedo vicharshaṇe Agne janāmi sushṭutim |

'Wise Agni Jatavedas, I generate a hymn for thee who receivest it with favour.'

Rig-veda viii. 43. 2.

Other verbs are used with similar import to convey the idea that the rishi is the maker of the Hymn.

Asmai id u stomam samhinomi ratham na tashṭā iva ityādi |

'To him (Indra) I send forth a hymn, as a carpenter a car.'

Rig-veda i. 61. 4.

The following passage shows most clearly that the authors of the Hymns recognized the part that their own minds played in the composition of Hymns.

Imam stomam arhate Jātavedase ratham iva sam mahema manīshayā | bhadrā hi naḥ pramatir asya samsadi Agne sakhye mā rishāma vayam tava |

'Let us with our intellect construct (or, send forth) like a car, this hymn for the adorable Jātavedas, for his wisdom is favourable to us in the assembly. Agni in thy friendship may we never suffer.'

Rig-veda i. 94. 1.

The idea that the hymns were altogether their own work seems however always foreign to the ṛishis.

Some hymns ask for or acknowledge divine assistance just as poets of all nations often do. One poet says:

Indra mṛiḷa mahyam jīvātum ichcha chodāya dhiyam ayaso na dhārām | Yat kincha aham tvāyur idam vadāmi taj jushasva kṛidhi mā devavantam |

'O God (Indra), have mercy, give me my daily bread; sharpen my mind, like the edge of an iron instrument. Whatever I now may utter, longing for thee, do thou accept it; give me divine protection.'

Rig-veda vi. 47. 10.

Direct divine inspiration is asserted.

Sa pratnathā Kavi-vṛidhaḥ Indro vākasya vakshaṇiḥ |

'Indra was of old the promoter of the poet, and the augmenter of the song.'

Rig-veda viii. 52. 4.

From these, and from many other passages it may fairly be reasoned that at the time when the Hymns were

composed their authors while considering themselves as rendering service specially pleasing to the Gods by composing Hymns, certainly considered those Hymns to be their own work.

One notable text in the Ṛig-veda which refers to the creation of the Vedas occurs in the Tenth Book in the well known Ninetieth Hymn called the Puruṣa Sūkta. The Tenth Book is generally believed to contain Hymns of much later date than the preceding Books so that there is reason to doubt whether a tradition in the Puruṣa Sūkta is to be taken as of very ancient authority. Professor Macdonell says it is one of the very latest poems of the Ṛigvedic age; for it presupposes a knowledge of the three Vedas, to which it refers by their names, and it also mentions the four castes. It describes the creation of the universe by the gods out of the body of a primeval giant with a thousand heads. 'The act of creation is treated as a sacrificial rite, the original man being conceived as a victim, the parts of which when cut up become portions of the universe. His head, we are told, became the sky, his navel the air, his feet the earth, while from his mind sprang the Moon, from his eye the Sun, from his breath the wind'.[1]

The Hymn has been quoted in full on pages 165–6. The verse that relates to the origin of the Vedas states that the Rig, Sāma and Yajur Vedas were born from the sacrifice. It does not mention the Atharva-veda.

Tasmād yajnāt sarvā-hataḥ ṛichaḥ sāmāni jajnire |
chandāmsi jajnire tasmād yajus tasmād ajayata |

[1] MACDONELL, *Sanskrit Literature*, p. 133.

'From that universal sacrifice were born the Rich and Saman verses: the metres were born from it: the Yajush was created.'

Rig-veda x. 90. 9.

New and Old Hymns

Dr. Muir quotes more than fifty passages to show that the authors of the Vedic hymns themselves recognized that some hymns were new and some were old. This alone proves that the tradition of the eternity of these hymns had no place in the thought of the Vedic poets themselves. It will be sufficient to quote one or two of these verses.

The ṛishis believed that the Gods would be better pleased if their praises were celebrated in new, and perhaps more elaborate compositions, than if older and possibly ruder, prayers had been repeated.

Sa naḥ stavānaḥ ābhara gāyatreṇa navīyasā | rayim vīravatīm isham |

'Glorified by our newest hymn, do thou bring to us wealth and food with progeny.'

Rig-veda i. 12. 11.

Tān pūrvayā nividā hūmahe vayam Bhagam Mitran Aditim Dakshan Asridham ityādi |

'We invoke with an ancient hymn Bhaga Mitra, Aditi, Daksha, Asridh.'

Rig-veda i. 89. 3.

Yaḥ pūrvyābhir uta nūtanābhir gīrbhir vāvṛidhe griṇatām rishīnām |

'He (Indra) who grew though the ancient and modern hymns of lauding ṛishis.'

Rig-veda vi. 44. 13.

Ā sakhāyaḥ subardughām dhenum ajadhvam upa navyasā vachaḥ |

'Friends, drive hither the milch cow with a new hymn.'

Rig-veda vi. 48. 11.

Nu navyase navīyase sūktāya sādhaya pathāḥ | *pratna-vad rochaya ruchaḥ* |

'Prepare (O Soma) the paths for our newest, most recent hymn; and, as of old, cause the lights to shine.'

Rig-veda ix. 9. 8.

Traditions in the Atharva-veda

Several traditions find expression in the hymns of the Atharva-veda.

i. The seventh hymn of the tenth maṇḍala of the Atharva-veda in a somewhat similar way to the Puruṣa Sūkta of the Rig-veda identifies Skambha with the universe and describes all things as derived from him. All four vedas are mentioned in it.

Yasmād ṛicho apātakshan yajur yasmād apākashan | *sāmāni yasya lomāni atharvāngiraso mukham* | *Skambham tam brūhi katamaḥ svid eva saḥ* |

'Declare who is that Skambha from whom they cut off the Ṛich verses, from whom they scraped off the Yajush, of whom the Sāman verses are the hairs, and the verses of the Atharvan and the Angiras the mouth.'

Atharva-veda x. 7. 20.

ii. The seventh hymn of the eleventh maṇḍala of the Atharva-veda is a glorification of Uchchhishṭa, the 'residue of sacrifice.' It states that the Vedas sprung from the 'Leavings of Sacrifice.'

Ṛichaḥ sāmāni chhandāmsi purāṇam yajushā saha |
Uchchhishṭāj jajnire sarva divi devāḥ diviśritaḥ |

'From the leavings of the sacrifice sprung the Rich and Saman verses, the metres, the Purana with the Yajush, and all the gods who dwell in the sky.'

Atharva-veda xi. 7. 24.

iii. Another tradition in the same Veda says that the Vedas sprung from Indra, and he sprung from them.

Sa vai ṛigbhyo ajāyata tasmād ṛicho ajāyanta |

'Indra sprung from the Rich verses; the Rich verses sprung from him.'

Atharva-veda xiii. 4. 38.

iv. A verse in a later book states that the Vedas sprung from Time.

Kālād ṛichaḥ sambhavan yajuḥ kālād ajayata |

'From Time the Rich verses sprung; the Yajush sprung from Time.'

Atharva-veda xix. 54. 3.

Traditions in the Brahmanas

It is impossible to say definitely at what dates the various Brāhmaṇas were composed. Both they and the Atharva-veda belong to the same period and both are much later than the Rig-veda. The period when the Brāhmaṇas were composed may however with some reason be said to end about 600 B. C., but, of course, they contain traditions earlier than that date.

i. The Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa closely connected with the text of the Black (Kṛishṇa) Yajur-veda, is one of the earliest Brāhmaṇas, while the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa is of later date, perhaps one of the latest of them.[1] One or

[1] MACDONELL, *Sanskrit Literature*, p. 203.

two quotations from them will show the character of the beliefs concerning the origin of the Vedas that had become current during the Brāhmaṇic period and that were embodied in and endorsed by them.

ii. Two passages may be cited from the Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa. The first is a eulogy of Vāch, the goddess of speech. She is declared to be the mother of the Vedas.

Vāg aksharam prathamajā ṛitasya vedānām mātā amṛitasya nābhiḥ | sā no jushāṇā upa yajnam āgād avantī devī suhavā me astu | yām ṛishayo mantra-krito manishiṇaḥ anvaichhan devās tapasā śrameṇa |

'Vāch is an imperishable thing and the first-born of the ceremonial, the mother of the Vedas, and the centre-point of immortality. Delighting in us, she came to the sacrifice. May the protecting goddess be ready to listen to my invocation—she whom the wise rishis, the composers of hymns, the gods, sought by austere fervour and by laborious devotion.

Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa ii. 8. 8. 5.

iii. The other passage is an example of the grotesque symbolism that surprises the reader of the Sacred Books. It states that the Vedas are the hair of Prajapati's beard.

Prājāpater vai etāni śmaśrūṇi yad vedaḥ |

Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa iii. 3. 9. 1.

iv. Of the two passages quoted here from the later Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa, the first is interesting for the figure of speech and for its assertion that the Vedas were dug from the mind-ocean by the labour of the gods, the

devas, who are not of supreme rank. In the other passage the Vedas are called the breathings of the Great Being and classed with works like the *sūtras* which are generally considered to be merely human compositions (*paurusheya*) without independent authority.

Mano vai samudraḥ | manaso vai samudrād vāchā 'bhryā devās trayīm vidhyām nirakhanan. |

'Mind is the Ocean. From the mind-ocean, with speech for a shovel, the gods dug out the triple Vedic science.'

Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa vii. 5. 2. 52.

Sa yathā ārdredhāgner abhyāhitāt pṛithag dhūmāḥ viniścharanti evam vai are 'sya mahato bhūtasya niśvasitam etad yad ṛigvedo yajurvedaḥ sāmavedo 'tharvāngirasaḥ itihāsaḥ purāṇam vidyā upanishadaḥ ślokāḥ sūtrāṇy anuvyākhyānāni vyākhyānāni asyaiva etāni sarvāṇi niśvasitāni |

'As from a fire made of moist wood various modifications of smoke proceed, so is the breathing of this Great Being the Rig-veda, the Yajur-veda, the Sāma-veda, the Atharvāṅgirasas, the Itihāsas, Purāṇas, Science, the Upaniṣhads, Slokas, aphorisms, comments of different kinds—all these are his breathings.'

Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa xiv. 5. 4. 10.

Traditions in the Upanishads

The earlier Upanishads were composed approximately between 600 and 480 B. C. The teaching in them is generally philosophic. The traditions of the past are used to illustrate metaphysical ideas, and are repeated as

symbolic of esoteric truth. Thus in the Chhāndogya Upanishad Prajāpati is said to have produced the three Vedas through the fire, the wind and the light of the sun.

Prajāpatir lokān abhyatapat | teshām tapyamānānām rasān prābṛihad agnim ṛithivyāḥ vāyum anta rikshād ādityam divaḥ | sa etās tisro devatāḥ abhyatapat | tāsām tapyamānānām rasān prābṛihad agner ṛicho vāyor yajumshi sāma ādityāt | sa etām trayīm vidyām abhyatapat | tasyās tapyamānāyāḥ rasān prābṛihad bhūr iti ṛigbhyo bhuvar iti yajurbhyaḥ svar iti sāmabhyaḥ |

'Prajāpati infused warmth into the worlds, and from them so heated he drew forth their essences, viz. Agni (fire) from the earth, Vāyu (wind) from the air, and Sūrya (the sun) from the sky. He infused warmth into these three deities, and from them so heated he drew forth their essences,—from Agni the Rich verses, from Vāyu the Yajush verses, and from Sūrya the Sāman verses. He then infused heat into this triple science and from it so heated he drew forth its essences,—from Rich verses the syllable *bhūḥ*, from Yajush verses, *bhuvaḥ*, and from Sāman verses *svar*.'

Chhāndogya Upanishad iv. 17. 1, 3.

Manu's account

Manu assigns the same origin to the Vedas in his account of creation.

Sarveshām tu sa nāmāni karmāṇi cha ṛithak ṛithak | Veda-śabdebhya evādau ṛithak samsthāś cha nirmame | karmātmanam cha devānām so 'sṛijat prāniṇām prabhuḥ | sādhyānām cha gaṇam sūkshmam

yajnam chaiva sanātanam | Agni-vāyu-ravibhyas tu trayam brahma sanātanam | dudoha yajna-siddhyartham ṛig-yajuḥ-sāma-lakshaṇam |

'He (Brahmā) in the beginning fashioned from the words of the Veda the several names, functions and separate conditions of all [creatures]. That Lord also created the subtile host of active and living deities, and of Sādhyas, and eternal sacrifice. And, in order to the performance of sacrifice, he drew forth from Agni, from Vāyu, and from Sūrya, the triple eternal Veda, distinguished as Ṛich, Yajush and Sāman.'

Mānava dharma-sāstra i. 26, 23.

The Mahabharata

Sarasvati may be said to have taken the place of Vāch in later Hindu mythology, and the Mahābhārata calls *Sarasvati the mother of the Vedas.*

Vedānām mātaram paśya mat-sthām devīm Sarasvatīm |

Behold Sarasvati, mother of the Vedas, abiding in me.

Mahābhārata, Śānti-parva 12. 920.

The Harivamsa

The Harivamsa, the nineteenth or supplementary book of the Mahābhārata, gives a different tradition:

The Gāyatrī, quoted on page 186, is the most famous of Hindu prayers. It is repeated to this day by every Brahman in India in his morning prayers. All kinds of mystic properties are ascribed to the Gāyatrī, and the Harivamsa contains a verse which states that the Vedas were produced from the Gāyatrī.

Tato 'sṛijad vai tripadām gāyatrīm veda-mātaram | Akaroch chaiva chaturo vedān gāyatri-sambhavān |

After framing the world, Brahmā 'next created the Gāyatrī of three lines, mother of the Vedas, and also the four Vedas which sprung from the Gāyatrī.'

Harivamsa 11, 516.

Statements in the Puranas

The Puranas give different accounts of the origin of the Vedas, in harmony with later developments of Hinduism. For instance, in one passage the Vishṇu Purāṇa identifies the three Vedas, omitting the Atharva-veda, with Vishṇu.

Sa riñ-mayaḥ sa sāmamayaḥ sa chātmā sa yajurmayaḥ | ṛig-yajuḥ-sāma-sārātmā sa evātmā śarīriṇām |

'He is composed of the Ṛich, of the Sāman, of the Yajush; he is the soul, consisting of the essence of the Ṛich, Yajush and Sāman, he is the soul of embodied spirits.'

Vishṇu Purāṇa iii. 3. 19.

On the other hand, the Bhāgavata Purāṇa says in one place that the Vedas issued from the mouth of Brahmā the Creator.

Kadāchid dhyāyataḥ srashṭur vedāḥ āsamś chatur-mukhāt | katham srakshyāmy aham lokān samavetān yathā purā | . . . Rig-yajuḥ-sāmā-tharvākhyān vedān pūrvādibhir mukhaiḥ | śastram ijyām stuti-stomam prāyaśchittam vyadhāt kramāt.

'Once the Vedas sprung from the four-faced Creator, as he was meditating "how shall I create the aggregate

worlds as before?". . . He formed from his eastern and other mouths the Vedas called Ṛich, Yajush, Saman and Atharvan, together with praise, sacrifice, hymns, and expiation.'

Bhāgavata Purāṇa iii. 12, 34 and 37.

The *Vishṇu Purāṇa* (i. 5, 48ff) gives the same explanation, with details as to the particular mouth of Brahmā by which each Veda was uttered.

APPENDIX II

The Metres of the Vedas

While Greek Prosody makes the 'foot' the unit in its metrical systems, and while in later Sanskrit the quantity of every syllable in each line was fixed in all metres Vedic prosody is less formal. The Vedic 'foot' or 'pāda' like the foot of a quadruped, means a quarter-verse because the ordinary Vedic verse contains four lines.[1] A pāda may have eight, eleven or twelve syllables. The *Ṛich* is a stanza generally formed of three or four lines. There are altogether fifteen different metres, but only seven are at all common. As a rule the whole of one hymn is in the same metre throughout, but sometimes different parts of a hymn are in verses of different metres. One hymn in Book I contains verses in nine different metres.

As regards quantity the first syllables of the line are not defined strictly, but generally, though not always, the last four syllables are of fixed length. In the eight and twelve syllable verses these syllables are iambic (short and long) and trochaic (long and short) in lines of eleven syllables.

Max Müller gives a list, according to Śaunaka, of the metres employed in the Rig-veda. The number of verses in which the principal occur are as follows:

[1] Macdonell, *Sanskrit Literature*, p. 55. *Vedic Index*, i. 516.

Trishtubh, 4,253 ; Gāyatrī, 2,451 ; Jagatī, 1,348 ; Anushtubh, 855 ; Ushnih, 341 ; Pankti, 312 ; various, 849 ; total, 10,409.

Ancient Sanskrit Literature p. 22.

Examples of one or two of the most common forms will be of interest to the student.

The Gayatri.—This is a common metre, one-fourth of the Rig-veda being in this metre. It is so called because the Gāyatrī, the most sacred text in the Vedas, is composed in it. It contains three lines of eight syllables. The first hymn is in this metre. The following is the first verse :

Agnimīle purohitam |
Yajñasya devam ṛtvijam |
Hotāram ratnadhātamam ||

Macdonell renders this verse in lines closely resembling the original,

' I praise Agni, domestic priest,
God, minister of sacrifice,
Herald, most prodigal of wealth.'

Anushtubh.—This contains four lines of eight syllables each, like the three lines of the Gāyatrī. It is now generally called the *Śloka*, and in post Vedic times took the place of the Gāyatrī. The following is an example :

Srushṭivāno hi dāśushe
Devāḥ Agne vichetasaḥ |
Tān rohidaśva girvaṇas
Trayastrimśatam ā vaha |

' Agni, the wise gods lend an ear to their worshipper. God with the ruddy steeds, who lovest praise, bring hither those three and thirty.'

Rig-veda i. 45. 2.

Trishtubh.—About two-fifths of the Rig-veda are composed in the Trishtubh metre. It consists of four lines of eleven syllables. The name means three steps, one short and two long. The following is an example:

Anārambhaṇetad avīrayethām
Anāsthāne agrabhaṇe samudre |
Yad aśvinā ūhuthur Bhujyum astām
Śatāritrām nāvam ātasthivāmsam |

'Ye put forth your vigour in the ocean, which offers no stay, or standing-place, or support, when he bore Bhujyu to his home, standing on a ship propelled by a hundred oars.'

Rig-veda i. 116. 5.

Jagati.—This metre of four twelve-syllable lines is said to 'express the idea of cattle. Any one who wishes for wealth in cattle must use it.' Example:

Na tam rājānāv adite kutaś chana na
Amho aśnoti duritam nakir bhayam |
Yam Aśvinā suhavā rudravarttanī
Puroratham kṛiṇuthah patnyá saha |

'Neither distress, nor calamity, nor fear, O ye two kings, whom none may check or stay, from any quarter assails the man whom ye Asvins, swift to hear, along with (your) wife, cause to lead the van in his car.'

Rig-veda x. 39. 11.

The Aryan had a firm belief in the power of the rightly pronounced prayer to secure its aim. This appears in the way in which the gods are addressed in some of the hymns. It also underlies the worship of the goddess Vāch. As the more elaborate system of Brahmanical Hinduism arose a complete science of the mysterious values of the various metres used in the hymns was formulated.

In his introduction to that Brāhmaṇas Dr. Haug summarizes the teaching of the Brāhmaṇas on the subject. He points out that the power of the Hotṛi priest at a sacrifice lay in his being able to use the sacred words frequently personified by Vāch. The sacred words, pronounced rightly by the Hotṛi priest, effect, by the innate power of Vāch, the spiritual birth of the sacrificer, shape his body, secure heaven for him, cause him to live a hundred years, and procure him wealth and offspring, will slay his enemies and destroy the consequences of his sins. But pronounced against a man by the priest or his enemies words will curse him unless he finds other words more powerful to counteract the hostile spell. This influence lies mainly in the form or metre in which the given words are uttered; hence the importance of metre, terms and words. Each metre is specially influential in the securing of some particular boon.

The Gāyatrī metre is the most sacred, and is the proper metre for Agni, the God of fire, and chaplain of the gods. It expresses the idea of Brahmā: therefore the sacrificer must use it when he wishes anything closely connected with Brahmā, such as acquirement of sacred knowledge, and the thorough understanding of all problems of theology. The Trishtubh expresses the idea of strength and royal power; thence it is the proper metre by which Indra, the king of the gods, is to be invoked. Any one wishing to obtain strength and royal power, especially a Kshattriya, must use it. A variety of it, the Ushnih metre of twenty-eight syllables, is to be employed by a sacrificer who aspires for longevity, for 'twenty-eight' is the symbol of life. The Jagatī expresses the idea of cattle. He who wishes for wealth in

cattle, must use it. The same idea (or that of the sacrifice) is expressed by the Pańkti metre (five times eight syllables). The Brihat, which consists of thirty-six syllables, is to be used when a sacrificer is aspiring to fame and renown; for this metre is the exponent of those ideas. The Anushtubh is the symbol of the celestial world; thence he who seeks a place in heaven should make his prayer in it. The Viraj, of thirty syllables, is food and satisfaction; thence one who wishes for abundance of food, must employ it.

Thus the Aitareyā Brāhmaṇa says:

'He who wishes for long life, should use two verses in the *Ushnih* metre; for Ushnih is life. He who having such a knowledge uses two Ushnihs arrives at his full age (i. e. one hundred years).

'He who desires heaven should use two *Anushtubhs*. There are sixty-four syllables in two Anushtubhs. Each of these three worlds (earth, air, and sky) contains twenty-one places, one rising above the other (just as the steps of a ladder). By twenty-one steps he ascends to each of these worlds severally; by taking the sixty-fourth step he stands firm in the celestial world. He who having such a knowledge uses two Anushtubhs gains a footing (in the celestial world).

'He who desires strength should use two Trishtubhs. Trishtubh is strength, vigour, and sharpness of senses. He who knowing this, uses two Trishtubhs, becomes vigorous, endowed with sharp senses and strong.

'He who desires cattle should use two Jagatīs. Cattle are Jagatī-like. He who knowing this uses two Jagatīs, becomes rich in cattle.'

APPENDIX III

VEDIC SANSKRIT

WHETHER the Vedic hymns present to us the language of the early Aryans as they actually used it in their daily speech, or whether it was a refined poetical dialect even in early days, as was classical Sanskrit assuredly in later times, there is not sufficient evidence to decide. Probably neither assertion is altogether true. Some of the hymns are nearer to the actual life of the people than others, more speculative, can be. In some there are what seem to be thoroughly colloquial expressions. Others are the carefully expressed utterances of thinkers who have followed generations of thinkers.

On one point however, there can be no doubt. Generally speaking the language of the Vedas represents a stage in which Sanskrit is still very like the language of the old Persian Avesta, a stage in which the Aryans of Iran and the Aryans of the Panjab have still much in common in their speech. And the language of the Indian Aryans is simpler, more direct, less trammelled by grammatical conventions than the Sanskrit of later days.

The subject has been carefully investigated by Sanskrit grammarians, both European and Indians. The greatest of Indian Sanskrit grammarians Pāṇini constantly recognizes differences between the ancient and the more modern dialects.

Muir[1] gives the following among other examples of the differences of Vedic from later Sanskrit:

Vedic Text

Vāyav āyāhi darśata ime somāḥ arankṛitāḥ | teshām pāhi śrudhi havam||

Modern Sanskrit

Vāyav āyāhi darśanīya ime somāh arankṛitāḥ— teshām piba śriṇu havam||

'Come, O Vayu, these somas are prepared. Drink of them; hear our invocation.'

Rig-veda i. 2. 1.

Here it will be observed that four Vedic words darśata, arankṛitāḥ, pāhi, śrudhi, differ from the modern Sanskrit forms.

The student will also find it useful to consult P. Peterson's *Hymns from the Rig-veda*, Bombay, 1900.

[1] MUIR, *Sanskrit Texts*, vol. ii, p. 205.

APPENDIX IV

The Contents of the Rig-Veda

Ancient scholars most carefully enumerated in systematic indexes, called Anukramaṇīs, the number of verses, the poets, the deities and the metres of every hymn in the Vedas.

As early as about 600 B.C. every verse, every word, every syllable had been carefully counted. The number of verses in the Rig-veda varies from 10,402 to 10,622; that of the *padas* or words, is 153,826; that of the syllables, 432,000.

In the ordinary recension of the Rig-veda, that of the Śākalas there are 1,017 hymns, with eleven supplementary hymns called Vālakhilyas added to the Eighth Book.

The recension of the Vāshkalas seems to have been the same as that of the Śākalas, but contained eight additional hymns, bringing up the total to 1,025.

Max Müller gives the following statistics for the Rig-veda from Saunaka's Anukramaṇi:—

Books (Maṇdalas)		Sub-sections (Anuvākas)		Hymns (Sūktas)
The 1st	contains	24	and	191
,, 2nd	,,	4	,,	43
,, 3rd	,,	5	,,	62
,, 4th	,,	5	,,	58
,, 5th	,,	6	,,	87
,, 6th	,,	6	,,	75

Books (Maṇḍalas)		Sub-sections (Anuvākas)		Hymns (Sūktas)
The 7th	contains	6	and	104
,, 8th	,,	10	,,	92 (+ 11 Vālakhilyas)
,, 9th	,,	7	,,	114
,, 10th	,,	12	,,	191
The 10 have		85	and	1017 + 11 = 1028.

Mandala I

This is called the book of the Śatarchins, that is of a hundred or a large indefinite number of authors of verses.

Of the hymns forty-four are specially addressed to Indra, forty-three to Agni, fifteen to the Aśvins, eleven to the Maruts, nine to the Viśvedevas, four each to Ushas and the Ṛibhus, three to Heaven and Earth, etc. Other hymns are addressed to gods conjointly, as Indra and Agni, Mitra and Varuṇa. Two hymns are addressed to the Horse, one is in praise of Food.

Mandala II

This book contains only forty-three hymns. It is commonly called the Book of Gṛitsamada, as nearly all the hymns are ascribed to that Rishi.

Fourteen of the hymns are addressed to Indra, two of them in the form of the Kapinjala, a kind of partridge, and nine to Agni.

Mandala III

This book contains sixty-two hymns, ascribed to the rishi Viśvāmitra, or to members of his family. It is

said that he was born a Kshatriya, but by virtue of his intense austerities he raised himself to the Brahman caste.

The rishis who wrote the hymns were not always friendly with one another. 'Especially prominent,' says Weber, 'is the enmity between the families of Vasiṣṭha and Viśvāmitra, which runs through all Vedic antiquity, continues to play an important part in the epic, and is kept up to the latest times; so that, for example, a commentator of the Veda who claims to be descended from Vasiṣṭha, leaves passages unexpounded in which the latter is stated to have had a curse imprecated upon him.'

Mandala IV

This book contains fifty-eight hymns. The first forty-one are ascribed to the rishi Vāmadeva, son of Gotama; so also are the last fourteen. Twelve are addressed specially to Indra, and eleven to Agni.

Mandala V

This book contains eighty-seven hymns. Of these twenty-one are addressed to Agni, eleven to Mitra and Varuṇa, nine each to Indra, the Maruts and Viśvedevas, and six to the Aśvins.

Mandala VI

The rishi of this book is Bharadvāja, to whom, with few exceptions, all the hymns are attributed. It contains seventy-five hymns. To Indra twenty-one hymns are

addressed; to Agni, thirteen; to Pūshan, five; to the Viśvedevas, four.

Mandala VII

All the hymns of this book are ascribed to the rishi Vasiṣṭha, with whom his sons are associated as the seers of parts of two hymns. There are 104 hymns; of which fourteen are addressed to Indra, thirteen to Agni, eight to the Aśvins, seven each to Ushas and the Viśvedevas, four to Varuṇa, and one to frogs. The prevailing metre is Trishtub.

Mandala VIII

This book is by a variety of authors. It contains ninety-two hymns, with eleven called Vālakhilya or supplementary hymns. Of the hymns thirty-six are addressed to Indra, eleven to Agni, five to the Viśvedevas, and three to the Maruts.

Mandala IX

This book contains 114 hymns. Except one to the Āprīs and two in which Soma is invoked conjointly, all the hymns are addressed to Soma. Even in the hymn to the Āprīs the attributes of Agni are transferred to Soma. He is addressed as Pavamāna, representing the juice as it flows through the wool which was used to strain it and thus purify it. The hymns were intended to be sung while this process is going on. There are very many repetitions in the book.

Mandala X

This book contains 191 hymns. To Indra thirty-four are addressed, to Agni twenty-five, to the Viśvedevas twenty-two. There are hymns on creation and several to be used as charms to cure sickness, to remove rivals, to prevent miscarriage, etc. The book includes some of the latest hymns in the Rig-veda. Several of the hymns are ascribed to gods, as if the real authors wished by this device to conceal their late origin.

APPENDIX V

Contents of the Sama-veda

It is not possible to present any summarised statement of the contents of the Sāma-veda as the hymns are arranged entirely for ritual purposes as they were to be chanted by the Udgātar priests at the Soma sacrifices and no order of subjects is observed. The text is divided into two parts, the first containing six books, the latter eight.

APPENDIX VI

The Contents of the Yajur-veda

The White Yajur-veda, or collection of hymns for the use of the Adhvaryu priests, as given in the recension known as the White Yajur-veda, or Vājasaneya consists of forty books. Almost half are taken from the Rig-veda or Atharva-veda and are metrical. Nearly equal in quantity are the Yajus texts, or sacrificial formulae, composed in prose and long passages, such as the lists of victims to be dedicated at the Aśvamedha and the Puruṣamedha which are in the simplest prose.

Books I and II contain the texts and formulae required at the New and Full Moon Sacrifices. Book III those for the morning and evening oblation of milk; Books IV-VIII those for Soma sacrifices in general; Books IX-X for Vājapeya or Cup of Victory and the Rājasūya or Inauguration of a king, two variations of the Soma sacrifice.

Books XI-XVIII give formulae for the constructions of altars or hearths for the various sacrificial fires; Books XIX-XX those for the sacrifice instituted to expiate the evil effect of excessive soma drinking, the Sauterimaṇi; Books XXII-XXV contain the formulae for the Aśvamedha. Books XXVI-XXIX contain supplementary formulae for the sacrifices already dealt with.

Books XXX and XXXI treat of the Human sacrifice, the Puruṣamedha. Books XXXII–XXXIV deal with the Sarvamedha sacrifice for universal prosperity. Book XXXV contains chiefly formulae to be used at funeral ceremonies. Books XXXVI–XXXIX contain prayers and formulae to be used at the Pravargya ceremony, preliminary to the Soma sacrifice.

Book XL is a sort of Upanishad not connected directly with any sacrifice.

APPENDIX VII

The Contents of the Atharva-veda

The following extract from Griffith's preface to his translation of the Atharva-veda will show the general contents of that Veda.

'The Atharva-veda Sanhitā or Collection' is divided into twenty *Kāndas*, Books or Sections, containing some 760 hymns and about 6,000 verses. In Books I–VII the hymns or pieces are arranged according to the number of their verses, without any reference to their subjects or the nature of their contents. The hymns of Book I contain on an average four verses each; those of Book II, five; those of III, six; those of IV, seven; those of V, from eight to eighteen; those of VI, three; those of VII, many single verses and upwards to eleven. Books VIII–XX contain longer pieces, some of which extend to fifty, sixty, seventy, and even eighty verses. In Books I–XIII the contents are of the most heterogeneous description with no attempt at any kind of systematic arrangement of subjects. They consist principally of prayers, formulas and charms for protection against evil spirits of all sorts and kinds, against sorcerers and sorceresses, diseases, snakes, and other noxious creatures, of benedictions and imprecations, invocations of magical herbs, prayers for children and long life, for general and special protection and prosperity, success in love, trade

and gambling, together with formulas to be employed in all kinds of domestic occurrences. In books XIV–XVIII the subjects are systematically arranged; XIV treating of marriage ceremonies; XV of the glorification of the Vrātya or religious wandering mendicant; XVI and XVII of certain conjurations; XVIII of funeral rites and the offering of obsequial cakes to the Manes or spirits of departed ancestors. Book XIX contains a somewhat miscellaneous collection of supplementary hymns. Book XX consists—with the exception of what is called the Kuntāpa Section, comprising hymns 127–136—of pieces addressed to Indra and taken entirely from the Rig-veda. These two books, which are not noticed in the Atharva-veda Prātiśākhya—a grammatical treatise on the phonetic changes of words in the text—are manifestly a later addition to the collection. Many of the Atharva hymns reappear in the Rig-veda, about one-seventh of the collection, sometimes unchanged and sometimes with important variations, being found in the older compilation. Interspersed in several of the books are pieces of varying length, consisting of curious cosmological and mystico-theological speculations which are not without interest as containing the germs of religious and philosophical doctrines afterwards fully developed in the Brāhmanas and Upanishads.

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